

3 1761 04771865 5

# FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT



STANLEY WASHBURN















Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

# TRAILS, TRAPPERS, AND TENDERFEET.

By STANLEY WASHBURN.

*Demy 8vo., Cloth, Fully Illustrated.*

Price 10s. 6d. net.

Second Edition.

---

THE TIMES—

This vigorous and charming book.

WESTMINSTER GAZETTE—

Makes the reviewer forget his functions, and turns him into a boy who can stomach any amount of rhetoric if only he is allowed to bear a hand in building that wonderful raft.

THE NATION—

A fresh and vivid account of conditions that will have disappeared with the present generation.

THE TIMES—

(A second review.) A delightful record by a true lover of the wilds who has the gift of writing.

EVENING STANDARD—

A remarkably fascinating life is this to which Mr. Washburn introduces us.

---

LONDON: ANDREW MELROSE, LTD.



"A Fresh and Inspiring Story."

# TWO IN THE WILDERNESS.

By STANLEY WASHBURN.

Price 6s.

Fourth Edition.

---

THE TIMES—

The reader is never wearied with the excess of music upon one note.

THE MORNING POST—

A fresh and inspiring story.

THE OBSERVER—

A romance of rare realism.

WESTMINSTER GAZETTE—

Well done ; very well done, in fact.

PALL MALL GAZETTE—

Differs entirely from the ordinary novel. . . .  
Has a peculiar fascination.

LIVERPOOL POST—

Wholly enjoyable and conspicuously fresh.  
One of the sweetest and most wholesome  
romances we have read for a long time.

SATURDAY REVIEW—

A more than ordinarily attractive novel.

---

LONDON: ANDREW MELROSE, LTD.

FIELD NOTES FROM  
THE RUSSIAN FRONT

Other Books by  
STANLEY WASHBURN.

**Trails, Trappers, and Tenderfeet**

Price **10s. 6d.** net. *Second Edition.*

**Nogi**

Large crown 8vo, **3s. 6d.** net.

**The Cable Game**

Price **4s. 6d.** net.

---

**Two in the Wilderness: A Romance of North-Western Canada**

Price **6s.** *Fourth Edition.*

---

**London: Andrew Melrose, Ltd.**







PHOTO BY RECORD PRESS, 29, FETTER LANE, E.C.

GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS.

# FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

By  
STANLEY WASHBURN

(Special War Correspondent of the  
"Times" with the Russian Armies)

ILLUSTRATED BY THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF GEORGE H. MEWES

SECOND IMPRESSION

LONDON: ANDREW MELROSE, LTD.  
3 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

136649  
4/9/15





To

LORD NORTHCLIFFE

IN APPRECIATION OF HIS EFFECTIVE SUPPORT AND  
CO-OPERATION WHICH ALONE MADE POSSIBLE  
MY WORK WITH THE RUSSIAN ARMY



## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

WHEN Mr. Washburn sent the original typescript of the notes that make up this volume, he accompanied it with a letter in which he said he depended on the writer to exercise his judgment as to whether the matter should be published in book form or not : and in case of publication to give it careful and if need be drastic revision. The writer's judgment being that there was in these notes a sincere and even valuable book, there remained but to take advantage of the free hand which the Author gave him in the matter of revision.

The result is a considerably compressed book, but owing, however, to the limitations of time and knowledge on the part of the writer, and the impossibility of submitting proofs to the Author, there are no doubt technical and literary crudities which Mr. Washburn would have made right in normal circumstances. For the present they must remain, and if in trying to improve a passage which bad typescript made difficult to understand, the writer has made "howlers," he hereby absolves Mr. Washburn and accepts full blame.

A. M.





## PREFACE

NO one realizes better than the writer the ephemeral character of the rough notes which form the bulk of the matter contained in this volume, and it has been with some hesitation that the material has been placed in the hands of the publisher for reproduction in book form. Much of the contents has already appeared in *The Times* (London), and various leading influential newspapers in America. It is by permission of the proprietors and editors of these journals that they are now reproduced, and to them the author extends his thanks for this permission.

The excuse for having these articles reprinted now is that the subject matter is still of current interest. The author is well aware that it is impossible to write authoritatively of operations so recent and of which at best he has been able to see but a trifling portion. He believes, however, that in Russian Poland will be decided the ultimate issue of the great contest

## PREFACE

that is now shaking the civilized world, and of Russia and the Russian armies there is less known perhaps than of any other of the factors now in the field. These Field Notes may be of no vast importance, but it is with the belief that impressions gained at first hand of this army and of their operations, of which so little is known, may be of interest, and perhaps of encouragement, to the Allies and the sympathizers of the Allies in neutral countries, that the writer is having them published in book form.

In justice to the writer it should be remembered that these notes were for the most part written during the period he was with the Russian army in October and February, 1914-15, and were, almost without exception, turned out under great pressure. Many of them were written on trains, and many late at night in hotels between operations. A few days in Petrograd between trips have been available in which to throw these notes together in the too loose form in which they are now presented. The intention of holding the material for a more serious and painstaking work has been abandoned in the interest of immediate publication, in the hope that the subject matter, such as it is, may be in print early enough to convey to England, and those in America who are in sympathy with the Allies, the impressions of the Russian armies by a neutral observer at a

## PREFACE

time when any good news from Russia must have more usefulness than finished literature published after the smoke has cleared away and the crisis is past.

The illustrations are from the admirable photographs taken by George H. Mewes, of the *Daily Mirror* (London), who was the only English photographer officially attached to the Russian army and who accompanied the writer throughout the trip described herein.

S. W.

WARSAW, RUSSIA,  
*February 1, 1915.*





# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PUBLISHERS' NOTE . . . . .	II
PREFACE . . . . .	13
CHAP.	
I THE NEW RUSSIA . . . . .	25
II A DAY WITH THE GENERAL STAFF . . . . .	41
III WHAT THE RUSSIANS ARE DOING IN THEIR HOSPITALS . . . . .	51
IV THE RUSSIANS IN LEMBERG. . . . .	61
V THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WAR . . . . .	69
VI A CROSS-SECTION OF GALICIA . . . . .	79
VII ON THE PATH OF WAR . . . . .	91
VIII THE WOMEN IN THE WAR . . . . .	101
IX THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST OF GALICIA . . . . .	109
X WARSAW . . . . .	127
XI THE FIRST GERMAN INVASION OF POLAND . . . . .	135
XII A REARGUARD ACTION. . . . .	149
XIII A RELIGIOUS SERVICE ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE . . . . .	159

## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
XIV SCENES ON THE ROAD IN POLAND . . .	167
XV THE TAKING OF KIELCE . . . .	177
XVI THE FIGHTING AROUND IVANGROD . . .	191
XVII THE ROMANCE OF WAR . . . .	209
XVIII WARSAW DURING THE SECOND GERMAN AD- VANCE . . . . .	227
XIX A NIGHT ATTACK IN A SNOW-STORM . . .	237
XX A VISIT TO THE TRENCHES . . . .	249
XXI INSPECTING THE WARSAW FRONT . . . .	261
XXII THE NORTH BZURA FRONT . . . .	275
XXIII CONCLUSION . . . . .	285



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FACE PAGE
The Grand Duke Nicholas. ( <i>Photo by RECORD PRESS</i> )	<i>Frontispiece</i>
A Russian Airship near the German Lines . . . . .	32
Russian Infantry on the March . . . . .	36
Russian Wounded at a Base Hospital in Poland . . . . .	52
<i>Times</i> Correspondents' Car in Difficulties: Austrian Prisoners help to Rescue Car . . . . .	62
Austrian Prisoners by the Railway . . . . .	64
A Russian Grave in Galicia . . . . .	70
Austrian Grave in the Trenches (Galicia) . . . . .	72
Stanley Washburn talking with a wounded Austrian . . . . .	74
A Russian Artist sketches a Spy who has just been arrested . . . . .	80
Bridge over the Dneister destroyed by the Austrians during their Retreat . . . . .	82
Railway Bridge over the Dneister destroyed by the Austrians before retreating. . . . .	84
Bridge over River Dneister destroyed by the Austrians	86
Galician Village destroyed by Russian Artillery. Note how the Churches have been spared . . . . .	92
Halicz . . . . .	96
Correspondents' Special Train . . . . .	105
Galician Peasants . . . . .	112
Transport fording a River in Poland: remains of de- stroyed Bridge can be seen in the Foreground . . . . .	114
Transport crossing a River in Poland, the Bridge having been destroyed by the Germans. . . . .	118
Cross with Figure partly shattered by Shell Fire . . . . .	120

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FACE PAGE
Church destroyed by Artillery. Note the Cross un- touched . . . . .	122
Austrian Prisoners with their Russian Guard . . .	130
A Cossack Patrol entering a Polish Village during the German Retreat . . . . .	136
Stanley Washburn chatting with German and Austrian Prisoners in Poland . . . . .	140
Graves of Russian Officers killed during the Fighting near Warsaw . . . . .	142
Uhlans captured by the Cossacks . . . . .	144
A Battlefield in Poland . . . . .	150
German Prisoner and his Russian Guard . . . . .	154
Service on the Battlefield: a Prayer. . . . .	159
Service on the Battlefield: Soldiers at Prayer . . .	160
Service on the Battlefield: placing Prayer-Book on Bayonets . . . . .	162
Service on the Battlefield: Priest showing the Cross to the Troops . . . . .	164
Transport passing through a Polish Village . . .	168
A Cossack Patrol . . . . .	170
Occupation of Kielce by the Russians during the Ger- man Retreat in Poland . . . . .	178
Russian Field Gun in Action (Poland) . . . . .	180
Russian Field Gun in Action (Poland) . . . . .	182
Austrian Prisoners resting by the Road-side . . .	186
Russian Infantry passing through Kielce, following up the German Retreat from Warsaw . . . . .	188
Transport in Marsh Land. . . . .	194
Russian Advance Guard occupies Kielce . . . . .	196
Ammunition Wagon left by the Austrians after the Battle of Avgoustow . . . . .	202
A Russian Grave near Avgoustow . . . . .	204
Villagers in Poland searching amongst the Ruins of their Homes . . . . .	212

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FACE PAGE
Russian Soldiers Entrenching (Poland) . . . . .	216
A Siberian Pony in Difficulties. . . . .	222
Correspondents' Car in Difficulties: Russian Soldiers to the Rescue . . . . .	228
A Russian Soldier writing Home from the Trenches .	238
<i>Times</i> Correspondent (Stanley Washburn) and Maj.- Gen. Sir Hanbury Williams . . . . .	250
A Soldier's Dug-out. . . . .	254
The Colours in the Trenches . . . . .	256





# THE NEW RUSSIA



## CHAPTER I

### THE NEW RUSSIA

PETROGRAD, RUSSIA,  
*September 10, 1914.*

WHEN Wilhelm II of Germany signed the declaration of war against Russia, the hour struck throughout this vast empire which the future historian will register as one of the great epoch-making moments in the history not only of this month and year, but in that greater narrative on whose great white page the rise and fall of races and the ebb and flow of civilizations as registered by centuries are traced. For in this hour there dawned in Russia a new era, and from the twilight of the ten years of chaos and uncertainty, which followed the Japanese war there can now be traced the rising of a great light in which the world shall see a New Russia revealed, a country alert and ready to take its place among the progressive nations of the world.

The philosophy of the Teutons has completely misjudged the psychology of the Russian



## FIELD NOTES FROM

nation. There seems small doubt that the Germans believed, if worse came to worse, that by raising the old familiar cry of the " Slav Peril " the sympathy of the world would be immediately gained. But the reasoning of the diplomats has proved of no avail. The cry now falls upon deaf ears, because the world is just beginning to realize that the menace of the Slav is a gradually disappearing bogey. When the history of this war is written, it will be seen that the hour that the Kaiser had intended for the destruction of Russia proved in fact to be the hour in which she entered into her own among the modern nations of the world.

Ten years ago the misery and mortification of the disastrous war with Japan hung like a cloud over the whole of Russia. It was the privilege of the writer to be in Russia five times during the period embraced by that Russian national calamity. In Petersburg every form of civil and economic disorder was rampant. In the provinces riots and confusion of all sorts and descriptions abounded.

The Press of the world screamed aloud in letters six inches high, that the dissolution of the empire was at hand, that Russia would collapse ; and indeed nothing that could spell impending disaster was overlooked in the lurid reports of the observers in Russia. All over the land there were protest and unrest. Chaos and anarchy

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

seemed the order of the day, and the outlook was gloomy indeed. As we look back now we can see that from that dismal period great good has come, for in the hour of gloom and disaster the ground was broken for the new and better Russia that just now is looming bigger and bigger before the world each day. Out of the darkness has come light, and from travail and agony has come the birth of a new spirit and a unity in Russia such as its centuries of history fail to record.

No doubt this seems effusive and exaggerated to English and American readers, who know of Russia only as a mysterious and traditional menace; but that this change is a definite and realized fact, no one who knew Russia ten years ago and sees it now can for a moment doubt. Perhaps the best means of illustrating the altered spirit in this war, and the spirit during and after the Russo-Japanese war, is by the narration of two incidents, pictures, as it were, of the heart of the Russian people ten years apart.

In January, 1905, after the fall of Port Arthur and the collapse of the Russian programme, rebellion against, and hostility towards, the Government were everywhere manifest. On the historic day of January 22, 1905, an army of peasants, bearing a monster petition, moved down the Nevsky Prospekt and on towards the Winter Palace to

## FIELD NOTES FROM

present their grievances to their monarch in person. They were met with machine guns and Cossacks, and in a few minutes the streets ran red with blood. For weeks there was martial law within this district, and by day and by night patrols of Cossacks could be seen riding up and down, patrolling the silent, snow-clad streets of Russia's greatest city. The Czar was threatened, and the Grand Duke Sergius was assassinated. Threats of all kinds of violence were openly made: many were carried out; and such a thing as unity in Russia was a dream.

Since those dreadful days a new leaven has been working throughout the whole empire, and slowly, subtly and unseen, the great forces of progress and new light have been working. This neither the Germans nor perhaps even the Russians themselves fully realized until the declaration of war with Germany, when overnight there crystallized a national spirit of unity such as few countries have ever seen. And on that day we have almost in the exact spot as the incident of January 22, 1905, another picture. Let the two be contrasted.

Before the Winter Palace, the great red home of the Czars, stretches an enormous semicircle, which forms one of the greatest arenas in Europe. This is what we see now: More than 100,000 people of all classes and of all ranks standing



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

for hours in the blazing sun before the building within which is their monarch. Quietly and orderly they wait, without hysteria and with the patience so characteristic of their race. At last the Czar, moved by the magnitude of the demonstration, appears upon the balcony overlooking the square. Instantly the entire throng sinks upon its knees and with absolute spontaneity sings the deep-throated anthem of the Russian race. For perhaps the first time since Napoleon's invasion of Russia the people and their Czar were one, and the strength that unity spreads in a nation stirred throughout the empire, from the far fringes of the Pacific littoral to the German frontier.

The observer of a day might perhaps have said, "Ah, yes, 'tis ever so in war. But it will pass." Now the great thing, and the significant thing, is that the unity has not passed, but has grown steadily from that day. And its growth has not been at all of the spectacular kind, but of the deep and fundamental order which is expressed by millions and millions of humble individuals gladly giving their mite and making their sacrifices on the altar of the new nationalism that has swept the country.

Here in Petrograd one sees changes in sentiment that are almost incredible. The first night I arrived I wandered round to a favourite

## FIELD NOTES FROM

restaurant where on many previous visits I had taken my meals. The great dining-room was closed, and the brilliantly uniformed band that used to play was no more. The halls and corridors that ten years ago were filled with gay Russian officers were now abandoned. When I at last found the manager I asked him of the change. "Come with me," he said; "I will show you what the war means to us." Then he led me through a back corridor into the other bemirrored room where light and gaiety reigned of old till daylight. In the dim illumination of a few sprays of electric lights I recognized the former pleasure pavilion. All was dust and dirt, the hangings were gone and mirrors boarded up.

"What does it mean?" I asked curiously. The manager smiled, and turning out his palms deprecatingly answered, "War. It is because of the mobilization of our reservists. The morning after war was declared, comes here a policeman at eight in the morning and tells us that the Government occupies my dining-rooms at 8.30 for the mobilization of its troops. For many days they come here and take their arms and their uniforms. Now it is finished. They have all gone to the front—nine hundred from this room."

"But your business?" I asked. "It has



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

been ruined. No doubt the Government paid you for your rooms?"

He turned sharply as he replied, "Paid? What for? It is our war, and each man must contribute what he can. We are all doing it, and gladly."

And this very same sort of business was going on, so he assured me, in ninety-five other halls and restaurants in Petrograd alone, and all done freely, gladly, and heartily.

"But how about the reservists themselves?" one naturally asks, as the mind brings back the stories of another mobilization ten years ago when the peasants were driven almost at the point of the bayonet into box cars for shipment to Manchuria. Ah! it's a different story now. From all Russia they have been hurrying eagerly to the colours without murmur and without regret. The women, from peasant to princess, send their husbands to the front, with tears to be sure, but with a willingness to serve that means national greatness in the years to come.

And with the striking of the hour has come other great changes in the method of doing things. From the lessons learned in years gone by has come experience. The war in Manchuria was entered into lightly, one might say even gaily, by the officers. How different in 1914! The day after the declaration of war, every vodka

## FIELD NOTES FROM

shop in the empire was closed by Imperial decree during the mobilization, and since then, the shut-down has been further extended for the duration of the war.

In a cold climate where the drinking of vodka and other strong drink was almost universal, the significance of this action is immense. From Siberia to the Baltic there is not a public house open, and, further, the order is enforced to the letter; and greater even than that, it is accepted patiently and without complaint by the entire population of the country. The result is that the army and the people are serious and sober as they face the task that has been imposed upon them. The day of rioting and dissipation at the front and in the capital is a thing of the past, and every man is taking up the responsibilities of the great struggle with a seriousness that one who has known Russia and the Russians before, can scarcely credit.

Here in Petrograd, which we have always known as the gayest of capitals, all is quiet and earnest to a degree. The restaurants and cafés that in the old days were barely awake for business till midnight, and were running until daylight, are now closed promptly at eleven. In the face of Russia's greatest war there is no room left even in the capital city for the fashionable customs of peace. Dress clothes in the evening have almost vanished even from the hotels, for, as one man



A Russian Airship near the German Lines.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

told me, "No one thinks now of dress or appearances. Russia is taking her task too seriously for that." In the streets the splendid uniforms of the various regiments of the Russian army have given place to simple khaki tunics, with little and unobtrusive insignia of rank to distinguish the general from the youngest subaltern.

In London we should never have known that there was a great war on foot, but here one sees manifestations of it everywhere. Nearly all the great squares are filled with troops of the reserves, drilling and marching and counter-marching. Many of these have not even yet had uniforms issued, and in some of these companies every other man is clad in his ordinary suit, with only a belt and military cap to distinguish him from the peaceful citizen of yesterday. Long lines of carts bearing ammunition, with a soldier sitting on each wagon, file through the Nevsky Prospekt which but a month ago was one of the world's greatest avenues of pleasure. Yesterday I noticed a great siege train of artillery passing through the great area before the Winter Palace. Huge guns of position they were, freshly painted in their sombre coats of grey, and looking horribly evil as they were moved slowly from the arsenal to the station whence they are going to the front.

What a contrast it seemed! These silent, cynical-looking engines of destruction, that in



## FIELD NOTES FROM

another fortnight will be launching shells against a human wall, seemed strangely out of place as they slowly moved past the gilded gates of the giant edifice over which now floats the eagles of the Czar of all the Russias. Even now the streets are full of soldiers, clad in their campaign clothes, with set faces and determined eyes; and yet I am told that the mobilization is all but completed, and that what we see to-day is but a small fraction of the troops that swarmed in the streets a month ago. Truly, were the enemy to spend a day in Petrograd, or any other Russian city, he might well shudder at the tide that has been let loose, and tremble at the prospect of final conclusions with an empire of 170,000,000 people, that steadily, earnestly, and with set purpose, is putting its entire soul and its whole intelligence and thought into the struggle that is just now barely under way. No one who stays here long can doubt that Russia is in this war to win, aye, even if it takes ten years. The Germans have sown the whirlwind, and one recoils at the outcome that they must eventually face, when the arbitrament of the sword has reached its final conclusion.

That this war is a war of the people of Russia, and not one of any faction or party, is obvious to the most casual observer who takes the trouble to question people he meets, from cabdriver to

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

noble. I have talked with many during the past week, and so far have heard no word of protest or dissent. With patient unanimity they accept the war, with all its sacrifices and ghastly losses. It is not known here definitely what price is being paid in the field, but that it is large goes without saying. Each day there is posted in the immense outer chamber of the offices of the General Staff a list of the casualties, and each day anxious inquirers for dear ones at the "front" assemble there.

I have seen dead and wounded in previous campaigns, and for weeks at Port Arthur watched the daily procession of stretcher-bearers going to the rear. Later, for three weeks in a field hospital in Manchuria I saw the dismal aftermath of war, and the patient acceptance of the fate of mangled limbs and shattered bodies that shell and shot had meted out. But in pathos and appeal to human sympathy, all this was nothing compared with the scene that one sees daily in the places throughout Russia where the list of the fallen is posted. Great crowds of women gather daily to scan these lists, and it is a heartrending sight to watch the faces of the tide going in and coming out. Peasant women with shawls over their heads jostle and crowd their sisters who have come in carriages. As they go in, one reads the great question in the haggard eyes of each, and as they come out the answer requires

## FIELD NOTES FROM

no interpretation. You see them with trembling hands turning over the huge sheets of the lists. Some who fail to read the name of husband, son, or sweetheart, turn away with sighs of relief; but hardly a minute passes that some poor soul does not receive the wound that spells a life of loneliness or an old age bereft of a son.

I paused but for a moment within this dismal chamber, where even gilded aides move softly and respectfully as in the presence of death. But in this brief moment two faces stand clearly in my memory. One, a peasant woman with shawl fallen about her shoulders, her face dead white, her eyes in barren vacancy staring into space as she reeled against the wall. No sob, no sound was there to indicate that the iron had entered into her soul; but the tragedy of a life still to be led, with none to share the responsibilities of poverty, was written in letters that none could fail to read. Like one walking in sleep, she moved slowly across the room, her eyes blind to the respectful sympathy that made a pathway towards the door; and thus she passed out and away to take up her burdens and her lonely life.

My eyes turned from her to another picture. In the antechamber is a small table where an orderly generally sits. Now he stands respectfully by while in his chair there sits a young woman. Her neatly-cut garments and smart fur collar speak of her better



Russian Infantry on the March.







## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

position in life. She, too, has made her offering on the altar of the nation's life. Too proud to show her feelings, she has almost without visible sign, read her fate within those ghastly columns, and has reached the door only to sink into the chair. I saw her but for an instant and turned hastily away, but the picture remains ineffaceable. With head resting on the blotter, and hands clasped tightly beneath her small white forehead, she sat; deep, gasping sobs shaking her small girlish body through and through. And as she sobs her costly fur slips from her slender shoulders to the floor, and the great rough soldier, picking it up, gently places it about her neck. With an effort she stands up, speaks a courteous word to the gentle soldier, and then she too passes through the throng and is gone. Who is it she mourns, one wonders? Sweetheart or young husband, probably, who but a few short days ago left her in the prime and beauty of manhood and who to-day sleeps in a far-away grave, with hundreds of others of his race and kind.

And yet through it all one hears no murmur of complaint and no vain regrets. It is "their war," and cost what it may, and be the sacrifices never so great, they will give and continue to give. And in all this spirit one cannot but read the signs of a new future for Russia. For nothing can be truer than this—the greatness of a

## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

nation's future is established in the direct ratio in which its units, humblest peasant and highest noble alike, are willing to make the supreme sacrifice for a national ideal. And when any people are united in such an ideal their triumph is assured.

Now one sees and feels the tragedy of it all, a pathetic chaos of blood and human misery ; but beyond and above, one feels the conviction growing that from it is to come a new and greater Russia, a nation united by storm and stress, a country whose new progressive spirit will utterly destroy the tradition of the Slav peril.

## A DAY WITH THE GENERAL STAFF



## CHAPTER II

### A DAY WITH THE GENERAL STAFF

RUSSIAN HEADQUARTERS,  
*October 11, 1914.*

THERE is no romance about modern war. The picturesque features, which formerly were so much beloved of the journalist and so valuable to him as copy, are rapidly disappearing. The headquarters of a great army during important actions is supposed to be a place alive with galloping aides and vibrant with excitement. One likes to picture the commanding General haggard and worn, leaning over his map-strewn table; while muddy aides within, and panting horses without, await his bidding, to accompaniment of the roar of cannon and the crackle of musketry. But these days are entirely of the past. War is now a huge business enterprise, and the presiding genius is no more apt to go to the firing line, than the chairman of a railway company is likely to put on blue overalls and take his place on an engine.



## FIELD NOTES FROM

Here in Russia, under the command of a single individual, there is assembled the largest army that has ever been mustered in the field of war, and one beside which the Persian expedition into Greece conducted by Xerxes fades to a mere reconnaissance. All the huge and complicated mechanism of this gigantic organization centres in one secluded spot on the plains of Western Russia. It is a lovely country, and but for the variation of architecture and the difference in the population, one might easily imagine oneself in Western Canada. In a grove of poplar and small pine, a number of switches connecting with the main line of a certain railway have been laid, and here in railway carriages, living, quietly and peacefully, the group of a hundred or more men who compose the General Staff. A few panting automobiles dashing here and there, and a couple of hundred Cossacks, are apparently the only additions to the ordinary life of the village which is the nearest regular station on the railway.

Beyond, and hundreds of miles from this scene of tranquillity, extends the enormous chain of the Russian front, every point of which is connected with this train of carriages by the telegraph. Here, detached and with minds free from the hurly-burly and confusion of the struggle, the brains of the army are able to command a per-

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

spective of the whole theatre of war which a nearer position might utterly destroy.

The small group of correspondents whom the General Staff have permitted to join the army, were first taken to this rather remarkable headquarters. Here we were received by the Chief of Staff, who met us in his saloon carriage, and for half an hour pointed out what was expected of the journalists and what was forbidden. The point of view expressed is a perfectly simple one. The value of publicity and the approval of public opinion is not in the least overlooked, but it is perhaps considered to be a prospective one. The danger, however, of the functions of the Press is a very real one, and the results, if unfavourable, are immediate. Here in Russia they are grappling with the most serious problem in their history. An unwise word or the revealing of a critical situation, even if involuntarily and by induction, might result in the most disastrous consequences. In modern war, where the wireless and the telegraph play such important parts, it takes only a few hours from the handing in of a journalist's message until it may be in the hands of the enemy for his guidance, and perhaps help, though this is the last thing that the writer imagined when he wrote his dispatch. Where so much hinges on the outcome, and millions of lives are at stake, there

## FIELD NOTES FROM

is no margin for the war correspondent ; and it is perhaps safe to say that this will be the last war where even such an innocuous party as ours will be allowed to move about the field of operations.

The Chief of Staff, whose name is not to be mentioned in our letters, although it is perfectly well known both in Petrograd and England, outlined to us exactly what we could do and why we could not do more. For the present, at least, we are not going to run any risk of being shot by German expert riflemen. His reasons for the policy enforced, though disappointing to us, were none the less convincing in their logic. The gentleman who gave us this little talk, impressed me as one of the ablest soldiers intellectually that I have ever met. Keen, shrewd, restrained, and well-poised, he strikes one as quite the ideal of a strategist and organizer. How much he has had to do with the planning of the campaign I cannot say, but that he has been the centre of the web of strategy and reorganization is the generally-expressed opinion in Russia. In any event, if ever I saw a man who impressed me as being quite able to do this kind of work effectively and efficiently, it is this Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Army.

After he had talked to us we were presented to the Grand Duke, who, under the Czar, is in

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

supreme command of all the armies of Russia. He is a huge man of certainly 6 ft. 4 in., and impresses one greatly by his absolute lack of affectation and his simplicity. He spoke rapidly to us in much the same vein as his lieutenant, and as he did so one got the impression of a shyness and diffidence which was entirely pleasing. His dress and mien were as simple as that of any of his numerous aides. His expression was that of a serious, sober man giving his entire thought and effort to a task the importance of which he thoroughly realized. This, then, is the supreme head of an army which is nearly ten times the size of the Grand Army that Napoleon led across the Niemen a little over a hundred years ago.

After meeting these two interesting individuals, we were taken over to the Staff dining-room, in one of the dining-carriages that has been snatched from the *de luxe* service of the Imperial railways to serve as a restaurant for the officers of the Staff, and entertained to luncheon, and later to dinner. The carriage itself was formerly on the line between the Russian frontier and Petrograd, and was attached to the Nord Express, the train we used to travel by from Berlin to the Russian capital. Now, all the signs of tourist travel are gone, and the walls are hung everywhere with war maps and general orders of the



## FIELD NOTES FROM

Staff; while the tables where the travelling public used casually to dine are now crowded three times a day with officers of every arm of the service, each intent on hurrying through his meal and taking up the task that absorbs every waking hour.

Perhaps the most significant thing here is the simplicity in which all are living. The show and dash and display that one often imagines as pertaining to the Headquarters of a Staff are here entirely absent. I have already spoken of the absence of display in the uniforms of great officers. There are three Grand Dukes in the party, and all but the Generalissimo himself live exactly like the rest of the Staff, wandering into the dining-carriage for their meals and mixing equally with lieutenants and general, neither exacting nor receiving any more recognition than officers of inferior rank.

Though Russia is an autocracy, there is more social and civil equality in it than in any country I know, and the greatest men in position are the most democratic in action. As long as one does not meddle in politics, one can do exactly what one pleases without the slightest objection from any one else. The nobility are far more democratic than American millionaires, and are received, here at least, with far less ostentation than is exacted by the *nouveaux riches* of Eng-



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

land and America from their subordinates. The fare is simple, and the order forbidding strong drink is applied to these Staff officers with the same emphasis as to the peasant or to the cab-driver of Petrograd. Vodka, champagne, and the liqueurs that have always been so dear to the heart of the Russian gentleman, have utterly disappeared, and the Grand Duke himself permits on his own table nothing stronger than claret or white wine. When the men at the very top of the organization deny themselves the refreshment of alcohol, it is perfectly obvious that no one else in the army is getting any; and I think it may be taken as a positive fact that there was never a more clear-headed or more sober army in the field than that which is now facing the hordes of the Teutons at this present moment.



WHAT THE RUSSIANS ARE DOING  
IN THEIR HOSPITALS



## CHAPTER III

### WHAT THE RUSSIANS ARE DOING IN THEIR HOSPITALS

ROVNO, RUSSIA,

*October 12, 1914.*

NOT the least interesting aspect of the war here is the manner and efficiency with which the Russians are taking care of their wounded. Probably no greater or more sudden strain was ever thrown upon the medical department of an army, than fell to the Russians immediately after operations began against Austria. Not only were they called upon to look after their own stricken, but to as great an extent they were obliged to care for and treat the tens of thousands of the enemy's wounded that fell into their hands. Here at Rovno is one of the big hospital bases, and here for weeks could be seen the great multitude of the wounded that is the price of victories gained as well as of defeats. Eight huge barracks have been remodelled into hospitals, in addition to



## FIELD NOTES FROM

one large establishment operated by the Red Cross of Russia. The management of hospitals in time of war is always significant of the general efficiency of any army in its organization, and often one finds this branch of the service far less prepared to exercise its important functions than the other portions of an army in the field.

The most significant aspect to me was the obvious democracy of the whole management. But for our guide's statement to us from time to time, it would have been impossible to tell when we were in the officers' wards and when in those of the private soldiers. All have the same equipment in beds, blankets, etc., and all are apparently treated exactly the same by the Sisters of Mercy who nurse them.

Each one of these huge establishments that we visited was as complete in equipment, though not perhaps so luxurious, as a city hospital. Operating rooms, pharmacies, rooms for the X-ray apparatus, and, in fact, all the auxiliaries of the modern plant were in evidence. That the work done by these hospitals is effective is best indicated by the percentage of deaths resulting from wounds after the hospitals have been reached. In one hospital I was informed by the doctor in charge that more than 2,600 patients had been received, and of these there had been only forty-



Russian Wounded at a Base Hospital in Poland.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

two deaths. In another of smaller size, 306 patients had been accepted from the front and eighteen deaths had been recorded. This evidence indicates pretty clearly that the modern rifle bullet, unless it kills outright, inflicts a wound from which the soldier has more than a fair chance of recovering completely.

As one wanders about these limitless wards of the stricken, one is increasingly impressed with what the human being can stand and yet, with modern medical treatment, recover from. So delicate is the human body that it seems incredible that it can stand such dreadful usage and still recuperate and eventually be as good as new. One man that we saw had been shot through the head. The wound was clean and in two weeks he was nearly well, and obligingly walked about the room and smiled cheerfully to prove to us that he was a perfectly "good" man once more. Others shot through the stomach, bladder, lungs, and, in fact, almost all parts which were considered vital twenty years ago, were recovering as easily as though to be shot were a part of the ordinary man's day of work.

Here among the wounded were a number of Austrians and Germans who had been captured, and in each case they seemed cheerful and well satisfied with their treatment. One young German, who told me he belonged to the 25th Regi-



## FIELD NOTES FROM

ment of the German line and came from Pilsen, was very enthusiastic in praise of the Russians for their kindness. His regiment in a certain operation, he informed me, had been kept in an exposed position after all ammunition was exhausted, and had finally been dislodged by a Russian assault, and while retiring he was shot through the bladder. He was picked up within a few minutes by the Russian first-aid, received immediate treatment, and is now on the high road to recovery. He seemed secretly relieved to be safely out of the firing line, and his only anxiety was to communicate his situation to friends at home. An Austrian soldier spoke in much the same strain.

One rather interesting case was that of one of the Austrian doctors who were captured in the fighting around Lemberg. He was at once taken to the hospital and installed there as a surgeon and placed on a salary and footing identical with his Russian colleagues. In no case does one hear of any complaint as to cruelty, or even roughness, on the field of battle. The faces of the men and their general condition and fare make it unnecessary to inquire as to their treatment while in the hospital itself. Thousands of men have been received from the hospital trains in this town alone ; but already, scarcely a month after the first flood of war's effects



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

struck them, the hospitals are manifestly becoming sparsely populated. Thousands have recovered entirely, and others have improved sufficiently to return to their homes, while more have been sent into the interior of Russia and widely distributed for further treatment. With the experience of the first weeks of the war to stiffen them up, each of these organizations is now a perfectly trained medical institution, and it is clear that when the next great battle comes, the wounded will receive even more adequate and successful treatment than the first batch got.

The Red Cross hospital here is in charge of one of the Grand Duchesses, the sister of the Czar, who every day ministers in person to the wants of the wounded, private and officer alike. And here as in the General Staff all is absolutely democratic. The Grand Duchess dresses exactly like her more humble sisters, and performs all the tasks that the others do. In fact not one soldier in ten knows that he has met the sister of the Czar in the kindly attendant who has waited on him each day. It is this aspect of simplicity and democracy among the high-born that is most significant for strangers.

One feature which impresses one strongly in going through the hospitals is the comparatively rare cases of amputations that are necessary, and the few cripples that are left to drag out

## FIELD NOTES FROM

their lives in misery. The modern bullet usually either kills, or makes a wound from which ultimate complete recovery is quite possible. With the exception of shell wounds, and cases where treatment has not been available till too late and blood-poisoning has set in, there is small need for amputation.

The Russian soldier is not highly nervous, and hence I believe he is little apt to die of wounds which would kill a more sensitive man merely from the nervous shock. I have in mind the case of a man who was struck in the face with a fragment of an exploding shell. From his eyebrows to the ears there was nothing left. There remained practically nothing but the skull and the back of the throat, yet this unfortunate man actually lived for twelve hours before he succumbed to death. Another man was pierced through the right lung with a bayonet which left an aperture sufficiently large for the hand to be inserted to the wrist; yet this soldier, by last accounts, was actually on the way to complete recovery. The percentage of recovery from shrapnel wounds is greater than ever before. One hears a good deal of the peculiar effect of the high-velocity shells, which, as far as I know, have received little mention before this war. Men whom these big projectiles pass near are struck down, though they may not actually be

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

touched at all. Many of them are paralysed for several days, while others are so affected nervously that they become insane. It is said that there are several thousands of these cases alone in the Russian hospitals, and I have personally seen a number of them.

The hospitals at best are extremely depressing places, and one is glad enough to pass quickly through them. But in the midst of all the chaos and misery engendered by war, it comes as a relief to know that all that human care, skill and kindness can do to alleviate the suffering of the afflicted is being done here in Russia during this terrible time.



# THE RUSSIANS IN LEMBERG





## CHAPTER IV

### THE RUSSIANS IN LEMBERG

LEMBERG, GALICIA,  
*October 14, 1914.*

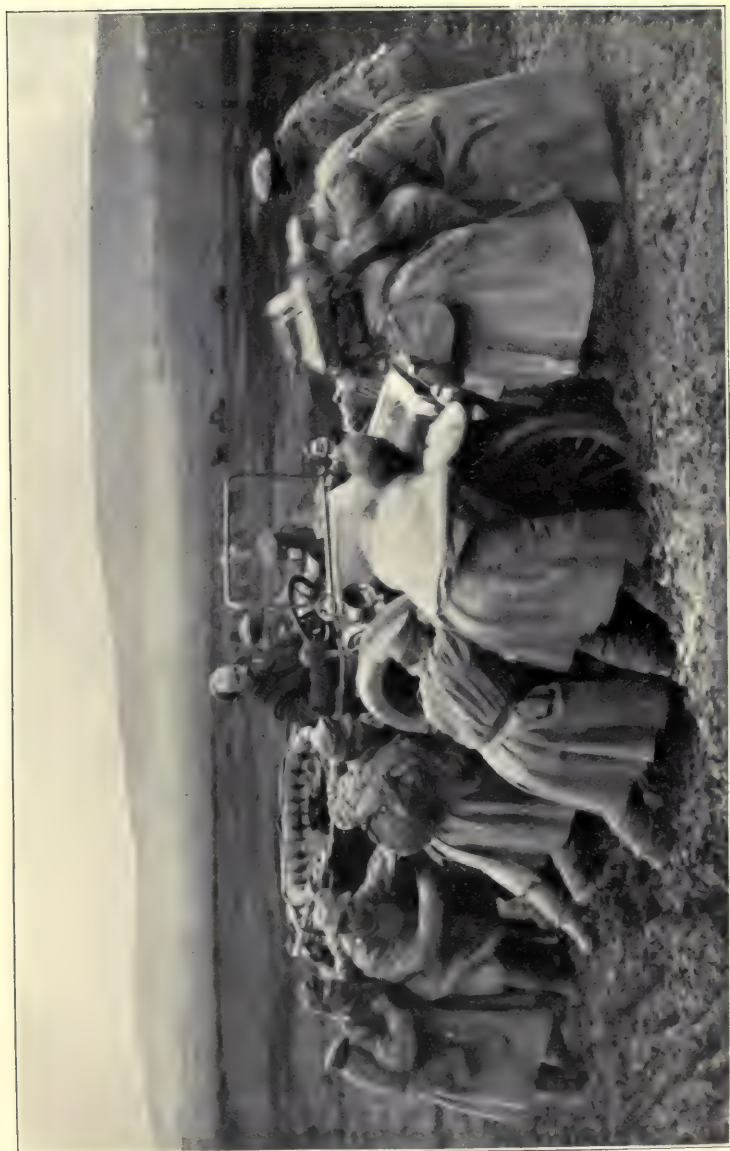
LEMBERG is so off the line of general travel, that the general public perhaps have failed to realize what a very important prize the Russians captured when they defeated the Austrians and triumphantly entered this most beautiful city. Broad streets, numerous parks, and shops equal to those of most of the big capitals of Europe, and half a dozen big first-class hotels, make this one of the most attractive cities in Austria, and one which will doubtlessly prove a great asset to the Russian Empire. With the possible exception of the Belgian cities, there is no prize of war taken by any other of the belligerents in this conflict so far, equal to this town. Just now the whole city is steeped in the atmosphere of war, and every street and corner reveal the presence of the ghastly cloud that trails over all Europe.

From the time that one steps off the train, it is

## FIELD NOTES FROM

impossible to forget for a moment that one is in the zone of active operations. The huge Imperial station, over whose main portal is emblazoned the name of Franz Joseph, is entirely in charge of the military. The instant one arrives, one is greeted by the Russian police with requests for information as to one's business here, and if some good evidence is not presented forthwith one never gets out of the station at all. In fact I do not think any person without a military permit can either get in or out of this place at present. The station itself is a huge structure, and is now filled with soldiers.

We arrived at three in the morning. The great waiting-room was packed with sleeping soldiers, while the dim light revealed the various baggage-rooms crammed with scores of coated figures sleeping beside their stacked rifles. The first-class dining-room is a hospital, and filled to the doors with stretchers and cots on which the wounded are waiting to be transferred from one train to another, or else to be removed to one of the local hospitals in the town. From the second-class waiting-room all benches have been removed, and there only remains one big table, used for hurried operations that cannot be delayed. At every door and in every passage sentries stand with fixed bayonets, and he would be a clever correspondent indeed who ever got



**"Times" Correspondents' Car in Difficulties : Austrian Prisoners help to Rescue Car.**





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

half-way through this edifice without being arrested, not to mention the difficulties that would await him without.

There is just one spot in all the building that is not used now for military purposes, the palatial room reserved for His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary when he deigns to visit his city of Lemberg. The Colonel in charge of the station kindly showed us this apartment, and the incongruity of it all made one shudder a little. On the track before it stood a Red Cross train which had just brought wounded in from the front. The whole platform was alive with soldiers. We stepped out of this chaos of human activities into a darkened room. An obliging orderly switched on some electric lights, and we found ourselves in a suite equal in every way to the Emperor's private apartments in his own palace. Heavy carpets, richly tapestried walls, daintily concealed electric lights, and rich and heavy furniture, completed as luxurious an apartment as any potentate could desire. A hundred feet away beyond the partition lay the soiled and dingy figures of the wounded—the men who pay the price of empire.

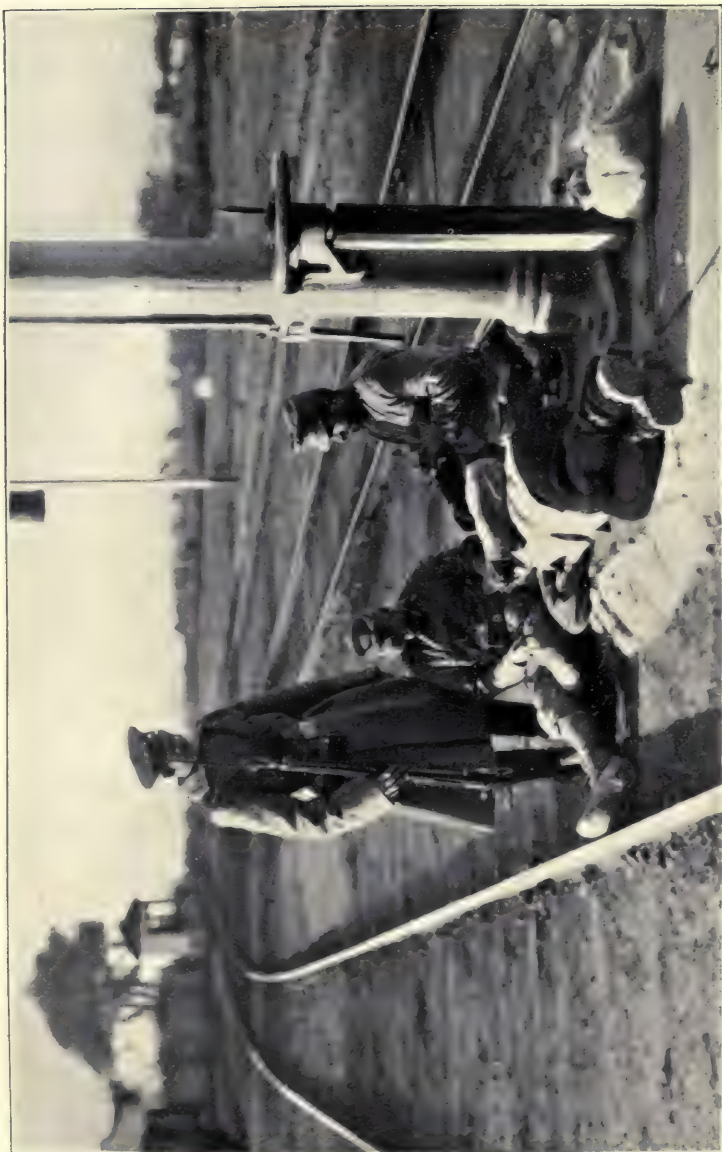
Every street in the town is dotted with Russian soldiers, while Cossacks on their shaggy little ponies are riding about in every direction. Transport carts, wagons bearing wounded prisoners,

## FIELD NOTES FROM

strings of cattle driven by Cossacks, and in fact every other form of military activity, abound.

The people of the place seem little disturbed by the hordes that have suddenly come to dwell among them, and every one seems to be taking the Russian occupation quite easily. There is little doubt that the incoming army has been in excellent restraint from the day it entered; and even the factions of the community most opposed to the Russian sway, admit grudgingly that the army has behaved extremely well, and that the troops have at all times been under perfect control. Considering that the Russians entered this town after desperate fighting that took place only a few miles away, it speaks very well for their restraint, in the first flush of victory after heavy losses, that their entrance was marked by no abuses of any sort whatsoever. From all the people that I have talked with I hear the same story. Even without this it is perfectly obvious, from the friendly way in which troops and population fraternize in the streets, that there has been no cause of complaint here.

There is, however, a good deal of sympathy for the Austrian prisoners, and I witnessed a scene this afternoon which made this quite clear. Down the street came a handful of Cossacks driving before them a flock of weary Austrian prisoners,



Austrian Prisoners by the Railway.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

perhaps three hundred in all. The Cossacks were riding among them in all directions, like cow-punchers herding cattle. Crowds of the inhabitants ran alongside, handing the sadly haggard, blue-clad Austrians apples and bits of bread; I saw also one well-dressed man, in a bowler hat, shove himself under the very nose of a Cossack pony and dump the entire contents of a well-filled and monogrammed cigar-case into the hands of the outstretched soldiers. Women from windows threw down bread and bits of food, which the Austrians struggled for as hens scramble for a few crumbs thrown them by their feeder.

The Austrians strike one as a very sad and gloomy-looking lot. Most of the men look sickly and delicate, and nearly all the prisoners and wounded look weakly and undersized. It is hard to believe that any of those that I have seen have had any heart or interest in the present campaign. It is certain that many of them do not care at all for their cause, if indeed they know anything of what the war is about. One thing that impresses one very curiously, is the considerable number of Red Cross Austrian prisoners to be seen about the town. None of these appear to be under any restraint, and you see them walking about the streets saluting the Russian officers as respectfully as they would their own; and they



## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

are also working with the Russian surgeons in the hospitals all over the city.

I am increasingly impressed with the enormous effort that the Russians have made to care for their wounded, and believe that in no previous war has anything equal to their establishments been achieved in scale or equipment. In this town alone there are forty-two military hospitals. Every public building and many of the hotels are filled with wounded. Libraries, museums, municipal buildings, and dozens of others, now fly the Russian and Red Cross flags side by side. These hospitals, however, as in the case of those at Rovno, are gradually being emptied, and the first great crop of wounded from the earlier operations is being moved elsewhere for convalescence. The Russian journalists with our column are perfectly delighted with their new city, and all seemed as pleased as children with new toys, and spent a day driving about the town looking at "our" public buildings, "our" station, and "our" parks.

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WAR



## CHAPTER V

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WAR

LEMBERG, GALICIA,  
*October 15, 1914.*

AS a preliminary to seeing actual war itself, we are being given an excellent opportunity to study its effects. Possibly the Russian authorities hope that if they show us enough of the human wrecks that war has created, we shall lose our present strong desire to get to the front and that we shall all go peacefully home and forget that we ever asked to be led to the firing line. The one phase of the hideous game that all who have ever experienced it try to avoid, is the aftermath of it all, and this is the particular and only aspect that we are seeing now day after day. In any event, be the motives what they may, we are living these days in the atmosphere of the hospitals, and every morning, bright and early, we go and look at a new one and inspect more wounded. When this great war is over the journalists composing this party may well

## FIELD NOTES FROM

consider themselves something of experts on military hospitals and wounded soldiers.

The incongruity of the whole game of war strikes one particularly in the hospitals. In the army we have two classes of men, both extremely clever. The one devotes its time exclusively to devising ways and means of shattering and annihilating its fellow-men ; and the other, with equal diligence, plans and studies how it may save the victims that the first class has provided for its attention and expert services. Everywhere we see the two classes mingling—the soldier and the doctor. The man who destroys and the man who repairs. The general comes to the hospital and admires the doctor, and the latter, when free, goes to the front and congratulates the soldier.

On the road the same curious aspect of these two classes presents itself. One passes a battery, for instance, moving into action. Here it goes clinking and clanking to the front with its eight dangerous-looking guns with the neat leather caps over the iron lips ; the whole reminds one of the dangerous dog that is muzzled lest it bite the unfortunate stranger who encroaches on its presence. With the guns go the long string of caissons, each loaded with its death-dealing shrapnel cartridges that the careful inventor has designed in the hope that each may realize





A Russian Grave in Galicia.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

its theoretical efficiency, and destroy dozens of human lives. Even the fragments of the shell, it is anticipated, will kill and mangle at least a few soldiers. The men that minister to the wants of the iron monster are all trained and drilled with the one aim to make their charge as murderous as possible. We see the battery pass, its every feature pregnant with intended death and destruction, its every attendant eagerly anxious to make its mission successful in the highest degree.

Just behind comes a Red Cross train, wagon after wagon. Each is loaded to the breaking point with chests of medicine, surgeons' implements, cots, tents for the field hospitals, and operating tables for the wounded. Here are men whose sole object is to save and repair. Perhaps this very day, perhaps in an hour, the guns will be in action. By nightfall in some wood yonder there may be hundreds of the enemy dead and mangled. The guns are now silent after a successful action. The gunners, the day's work done, are sitting about in their positions chatting merrily, or playing about with each other like overgrown boys. Their shelling has been successful and their officers have congratulated them on their excellent practice. It has been a good day for them.

In their quiet hour of complacent rejoicings over a good day's work, the Red Cross men

## FIELD NOTES FROM

who came just behind them on the road to-day are over in the wood or field, picking up the wounded of the enemy that their brothers with the guns have just laid low. The hospital tents have been erected, the operating tables have been polished, and the surgeon, now in white apron and with rolled-up sleeves, is doing his best to repair the wastage of the morning. Perhaps a particular shell has fallen well in the fight—so well that the officer in charge of the battery has rubbed his hands gleefully at the excellence of his ranging. No doubt at this very moment he is relating to his pals in the mess how he dropped one in the very angle of a trench, which he picked out with his high-power binoculars, and is describing the confusion created. At the same moment a tired surgeon and two haggard, white-faced, blood-stained nurses are probing for the shell fragments that have lodged in some torn and lacerated human body.

When the work is all over, no doubt the surgeon meets the battery commander, and listens appreciatively to the tale of the effective artillery fire of the morning skirmish; while in his turn the man of the guns attends sympathetically to the tale of the Red Cross man who describes how by a delicate operation he has saved a man with a shrapnel ball in his brain. Each congratulates the other, and both go to bed rejoicing in a suc-



Austrian Grave in the Trenches (Galicia).





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

cessful day's work. Truly war is a strange game, and the psychology that it breeds puzzles one not a little.

The hospital that we visited this morning is without doubt the best military establishment that I have ever been through. It was complete to the last detail, clean as a new pin, and would have done credit to any up-to-date city as a municipal institution. I talked with many of the wounded, and all seemed as contented as possible under the unfortunate conditions. But even taken at best, military hospitals are dismal places. Here we see, in hundreds and thousands, the men who pay the price of war. It is dreadful to contemplate the responsibility of the individuals who have precipitated this terrible disaster. Surely if the statesmen of Germany who so blithely entered into this war could see the suffering that their mistakes in diplomacy have scattered all over Europe, their nights would be sleepless or troubled for many years to come.

I am daily more and more impressed with the complacency with which the Russian soldiers accept their lot. There is no doubt that they have been deeply stirred by this war, and though they bemoan the misery that it has brought, nearly all seem to accept it as something that had to happen. It is certain that they hate the Germans and are fighting not unwillingly, but

## FIELD NOTES FROM

the case of the Austrians is quite different.

This morning I talked with a young Austrian reservist who has been lying now for weeks with a desperate wound through the body. I asked him if the war was popular in his country. He told me his pathetic story with tears in his eyes. He was a carpenter living near Prague. On the 25th of July he was called to the colours without even knowing what the war was about, and caring less when he did learn. "I left my wife and children weeks ago," he said, "without any warning. They had no money. Since then I have not heard a word from them, and have no idea what has happened to them or how they are managing to live at all without me. Why is it? I am an innocent man. I have no dislike of the Russians. They are a very friendly people. Yet we are still called away from our families and sent over here to attack men whom we have nothing whatever against. All the men in my regiment who came as reservists feel as I do about it, that is, all that are left. Many have been killed. We were sent forward after being told by our officers that we were marching against a thousand Russians, and we found fifteen thousand instead of one. I was shot through the back as we were withdrawing. After I fell into the hands of the Russians, everything was easy for me. I am quite satisfied here. They are very kind and



Stanley Washburn talking with a wounded Austrian.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

the nurses are very good to us. But always and always I am worrying about my wife and my children. Not a word since I left. How can they live with nothing? " And as he spoke, his brown eyes filled, and turning his face to the wall he wept softly. In Austria to-day there are thousands of similar cases, and every one of the forty-two hospitals here are filled with the same type of prisoner.

The longer I remain in this town the more impressed am I with the order and peace that prevail. Every one is off the streets by ten, and the bulk of the population seems perfectly indifferent to the change of masters. Even the Austrians here are not particularly hostile to Russia, and one of the anomalies of the situation is that the new regime has retained many Austrian policemen to preserve order in the town, pending the arrival of officials who will eventually come from Russia to take their places.



# A CROSS-SECTION OF GALICIA



## CHAPTER VI

### A CROSS-SECTION OF GALICIA

HALICZ, GALICIA,

*October 16, 1914.*

WE left Lemberg early this morning to make an inspection of the country which is now occupied by the Russians, and over which the Russian Army under Brussilov moved in the early phases of the campaign. While it is true that one would rather see actual battles in progress than spots where there was fighting six weeks ago, it is also true that the first day of this tour through Galicia has been an extremely interesting one. The news that one gets from such a trip is not picturesque reading, but the facts obtained are in their fundamental importance quite as useful as details of battle operations. After all war itself is but the culmination of events that have preceded, and is vitally important only in that it presages other changes that are to come. The battles are merely the visible outcropping of much greater forces.



## FIELD NOTES FROM

Here in Galicia we have the first opportunity that has come, to study the conduct of a Russian occupation during the present war ; and the time that has passed since the actual fighting took place is sufficiently long to give one a little perspective of the Russian Army itself, both in its battles here and in its conduct since these battles. On so huge a scale is everything being conducted, that it is perfectly futile to do more than generalize at this time ; the detailed story will require a lot of assembling before anything like an accurate narrative can be given. I shall not, therefore, attempt now to give anything but a very superficial account of impressions. I do believe, however, that the country through which we have to-day travelled may be fairly taken as a typical cross-section of the general situation all over Eastern Galicia, and as such it is not without interest.

We left Lemberg a little after seven o'clock on as perfect an autumn morning as one could wish to experience. The air was fresh and bracing as a clear Indian summer day in North Dakota or Southern Manchuria. The frost was still on the grass, and the leaves all turning made a gorgeous picture of autumn colouring in this beautiful landscape. At the station we found that our colonel had provided a special train for us in which to make our tour.



A Russian Artist sketches a Spy who has just been arrested.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

There is a tendency among the correspondents here to bemoan our fate in not being actually in the firing line; but personally I am impressed with the extraordinary effort that is being made by the Russian authorities to give us all that they can, without endangering what they believe to be their best interests, which, after all, is their own business and not ours. To-day, for instance, when engines fitted to the Austrian gauge, and cars to go with them, are about as scarce as hens' teeth, a train composed of a Russian locomotive altered to Austrian gauge, and two cars snatched from the service for the wounded and urgent communication with the front, was placed at our disposal for this journey. A third-class carriage, filled with soldiers as a guard, was attached, and, with sentries with fixed bayonets in our own car (all the country is still an enemy's one, nominally at least), we set out. Our first stop was at Sichov, just outside Lemberg, where there was one of the redoubts in the line of resistance that surrounds this town. This was one of the points made untenable by an enveloping movement, and hence it was abandoned without any effective resistance. It was a textbook fortification, with all the frills of barbed-wire entanglement that the military professors recommend so highly.

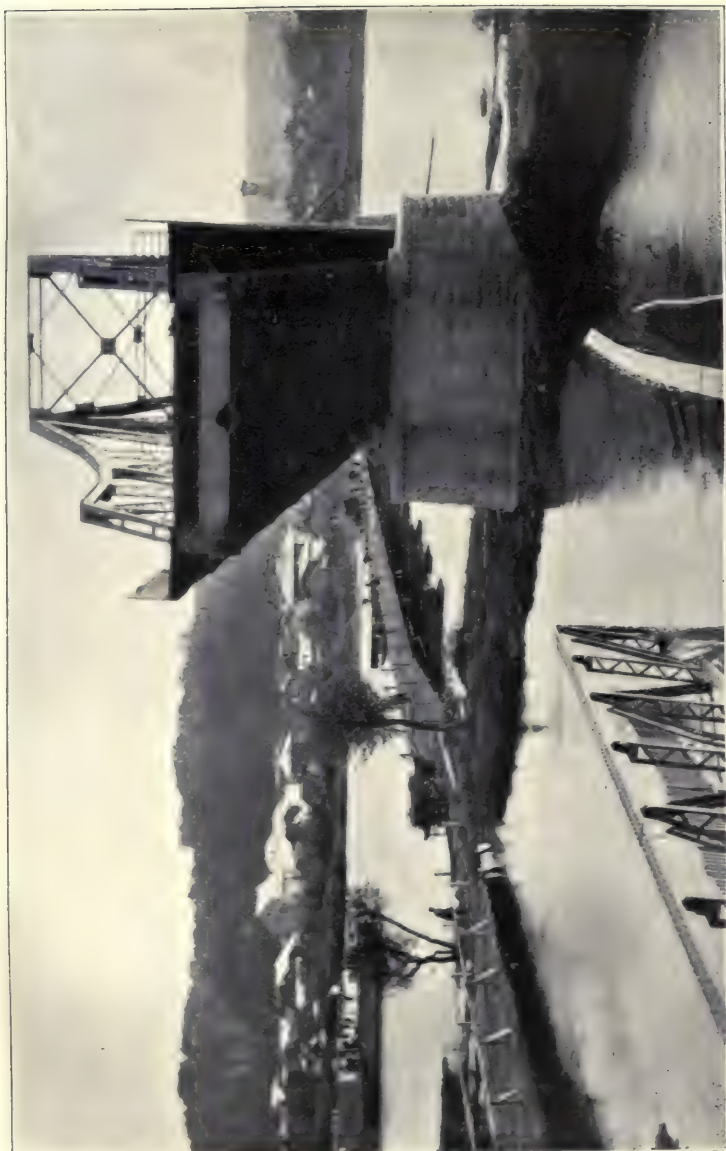
Next we stopped to look at an ancient castle,

## FIELD NOTES FROM

but the polite information of our guides that it was five hundred years old failed to arouse any enthusiasm among correspondents who were looking for blood only. Hence we proceeded to Chodorov, where there is a junction with a line running south-west towards Stryj. We were then run out a few miles on this line to a point where there was a very fine railroad bridge, which the Austrians, in their retreat, with the aid of dynamite, quietly dumped into the turbid waters of the Dniester, a river which in volume and colour suggests the Saskatchewan at Edmonton, or perhaps the Lio above Yincow in Manchuria. I must say that the Austrian engineers did an excellent job here, for their beautiful steel bridge lay a heap of tangled strands in the river, with the centre pier torn up by the roots.

After having carefully inspected this view of the enemy's handiwork, we returned to Chodorov and were taken to a near-by estate which was the property of an Austrian general, whose duties, and possibly inclinations as well, took him along with the army. This gentleman, it seemed, was not particularly popular with the peasants; and in the period that elapsed between the departure of the Austrians and the appearance of the Russians, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood visited the great man's house and paid him the compliments of many years of





Bridge over the Dneister destroyed by the Austrians during their Retreat.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

distaste for his person. They certainly did a complete job in house-wrecking. There was not in one room a whole piece of furniture. Every picture was destroyed, and the piano was a dismal chaos of keys and strings on which some local artist had been operating with an axe. After this visit we took our train and proceeded on our way to Halicz, where we are now resting in our handsome train for the night.

We learn that this town formed the extreme left of the Russian army of invasion, and the troops only reached here after two substantial checks. Near here the Austrians had an unusually strong position, and when they finally evacuated it after severe fighting, a large number of them came this way. Their haste was evident from the fact that they blew up the wagon bridge across the river in such a hurry that a number of the engineers who were putting on the last touches of preparations for their explosive enterprise, were blown up by some of their more enterprising comrades, who were anxious to be off. The explosion was not as near as the other was, but sufficiently effective to drop two spans of the bridge into the stream. The Russians were hot on their trail, however, and threw a pontoon bridge across the river just below the old bridge, and continued the pursuit. I am informed that no less than

## FIELD NOTES FROM

three divisions of Cossacks passed over this bridge ahead of the main columns of infantry.

Here we have a situation where excesses might be looked for, if anywhere. Cossacks pushing forward after a pretty stubborn fight in which substantial losses have been sustained, are not generally supposed to be over-delicate in their attentions to the natives of the occupied country. What any one can see for himself is, that the town, excepting a few buildings near the dépôt, is intact. What one hears from the officers and natives, is that they behaved with perfect propriety and paid for all that was taken. Generally speaking, one must take official versions as liable to prejudice, and naturally one cannot look for the inhabitants to abuse the Russian troops to a correspondent in khaki who is accompanied by an officer. I am inclined to believe the version as already given, for in every yard there were chickens, and on the outskirts of the town one noticed stock grazing in neighbouring fields. Evidently then, there had been no pillaging here. Besides, the manner and faces of the people showed neither fear nor suspicion of the troops quartered about ; and with the possible exception of the Jews, there was not a hostile look. The Jews, one must admit, looked pretty sulky, though on all occasions they were effusively polite.



Railway Bridge over the Dneister destroyed by the Austrians before retreating.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

It is true, of course, that the population here is thickly studded with Little Russians, and the Russian language is widely spoken; and as there was no resistance offered by any of the people, perhaps undue excesses were not to be expected. It is equally true, however, that an enormous army, even in its own country, is not much better than a swarm of locusts in a wheat field. All to-day, however, I have been greatly impressed with the condition of the country. With the exception of a few villages where fighting took place, everything seems absolutely normal. Geese, pigs, chickens and ponies are numerous in every town and village, while the whole valley seems to support the stock which one sees in almost every field. Much of the grain is still in the stack, and the fields are full of women working on the fall, ploughing, and gathering in the corn. There is nothing to suggest that a ravenous army, numbering hundreds of thousands, has swept through here, and this fact is significant of the restraint and discipline of the invaders.

It is clear from the preparations made in the vicinity, that the Austrians had intended to make a stand here, but thought better of it in the end; for many of their gun positions were never used at all, nor were their trenches ever occupied against the Russians. A number of modern

## FIELD NOTES FROM

quickfirers of the latest model had been abandoned in such hot haste that even the delicate sighting apparatus and the breech-blocks were perfectly intact. A whole trainload of these was on the siding when we came in, awaiting shipment to Russia as tangible evidence of the victories in Galicia.

At the station there were a few Austrian and Hungarian prisoners who had just been captured. It seems that they were relics of the early fighting, who had been hiding since the battle. They looked extremely cheerful, and were conversing happily with the Russian soldiery, with whom they fraternized with the greatest possible friendliness. With them, however, had been taken a remarkable-looking individual in skirts and buckskin shirt and a straw hat. He, it seems, was forty miles off his beat, and the experts decided that he was a Hungarian and belonged to the other side of the Carpathians; his association with the captured soldiers so far from his local environment seemed to impress the Russians unfavourably. This gentleman, be it said, did not evince any signs of enthusiasm, though he consented to be sketched and photographed. Possibly he was aware of the fact that he was under suspicion as a spy, and that his chances of an early execution were excellent, for his expression was not cheerful.



Bridge over River Dneister destroyed by the Austrians.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

The country here is perfectly beautiful, and the towns, with their varied architecture and more than varied population, are picturesque to a degree. Certainly none of these quaint villages ever had a definite conception of modern war, or of anything outside their peaceful valley, until this world storm swept through their town a few weeks ago.



ON THE PATH OF WAR



## CHAPTER VII

### ON THE PATH OF WAR

SPECIAL TRAIN, EN ROUTE LEMBERG,  
*October 17, 1914.*

WE were up at six this morning at our stopping place in Halicz. A heavy frost in the cool, still, morning air presaged the glorious day that followed. All in the vicinity was peaceful and quiet, with only the little half-noises of birds and animal life stirring in the early daylight to break the stillness that lay like a blanket above this wonderfully serene valley. It was hard to realize that such a thing as war existed, and that we were going out to view a field where but a few weeks ago thousands of men were intent on nothing less than mutual destruction.

After breakfast we left the station with a cavalry escort and proceeded some five miles, to a hill where the Austrians had prepared a rather pretentious gun position. Bombproofs, trenches, positions for heavy guns, and the usual advance trenches and barbed-wire entanglements, gave



## FIELD NOTES FROM

evidence that a strong defence had been planned. The position swept the whole valley, which lay below us like a map in the bright sunshine, with here and there the little villages dotting the plain. The main defect of this position seems to have been that the guns were so placed that at a slight flank angle they could not be used at all. As an amateur in military matters, it was a mystery to me why all this work had been done with such an obvious disadvantage. Perhaps some one knows the answer, but certainly it is not this writer. Evidently the Russians declined to come in the expected direction. In any event the Austrians never had a chance to use their guns, and left with such dispatch that the position remained exactly as they had left it. Here it was that the new field pieces were taken, their breech-blocks so nicely oiled that they slipped in and out as smoothly as a key in a good-working lock.

From here we circuited the hills for a few miles and then descended into the village of Botszonce, a point not far from a really important position vigorously defended by the Austrians. The whole heart of this little town was cut out by shell fire. It seems that when the Austrians abandoned their position farther on, many of them came this way. Retreating troops gravitate towards a village as iron filings to a magnet,



Galician Village destroyed by Russian Artillery. Note how the Churches have been spared.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

and here the residue from the disaster beyond began to accumulate. One can well imagine the officer commanding the Russian advance watching all this through a field-glass, and tersely giving the order to unlimber a battery and stir those fellows out of the village. No doubt fifteen or twenty minutes sufficed to lay the centre of the town in ruins. The significance of the whole, however, is perhaps in the fact that in about ten acres of wreck and ruin there stands conspicuously alone the town hall with a spire like a church. Immediately beyond are two churches also intact. It is clear that the Russian artillery practice was advised and efficient, for one building not ten feet from the supposed church was completely wrecked, while apparently not a shell struck the churches themselves. This would seem manifest evidence that the Russians, at least, are able to distinguish, even in the heat of action, between sacred buildings and those that are not. I was particularly interested to note the care with which the fire, not only here but in the few other villages affected, has been concentrated on big buildings, while the humbler quarters of the peasants have been spared. In this town not one was touched by shell fire, and the few destroyed were burned by the spread of adjacent fires.

## FIELD NOTES FROM

From this little town we pushed on to the ridge of hills again, where the Austrian position had been. This place, we were told, was but one link in the great line which extended from Halicz on the south to Rawa Ruska on the north, hundreds of kilometres away. The defence here was obviously stubborn and hard fought, and fighting continued for several days. It is over now by weeks, but the position with its gruesome relics and numerous newly-made graves tells its own story. For miles the line extended, and every trench spoke the story of the Austrian resistance. Heaps upon heaps of empty shells, broken equipment, fragments of burst shrapnel cases, coats torn and rent by explosions, and hundreds upon hundreds of knapsacks and cartridge boxes. Here and there the positions were occupied by the quickfirers, now piled deep with the big brass cases of the field artillery cartridges. Scattered through the field beneath were caissons and artillery relics that had been left high and dry in the stubble of cornfields in the retreat. It was a strange picture to see a peasant quietly gathering stacked corn in a wagon ten feet from a wrecked caisson that looked as much out of place in the peaceful scene as a ship high and dry on the seashore.

All the way back to Halicz the soldiers' effects were strewn, abandoned in their flight from



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

this position. It is extremely difficult to get an accurate story at present of any of these operations in detail, as the men who fought them are either dead or are still fighting at the front now hundreds of kilometres away to the west. The villagers have nothing but hazy ideas, and out of the confusion of their bewildered minds one gets little or nothing of fact. All the Russian officers and soldiers now here are of the reserve, and they have only general ideas as to the details which have come to them indirectly. It is useless, therefore, to try and picture or analyse any of these operations along this front.

What puzzles one most, perhaps, is the contemplation of what must have been the feelings of these villagers throughout this valley. Take Botszonce or Halicz as an example. One could hardly find a more isolated community in Europe. Their little valley is on the road to no place that any of us have ever heard of, and probably not one Westerner a month ever passes this way. Here in the midst of their isolation the population suddenly find their whole familiar countryside filled with armed men. Their trees are felled and their fields dotted with trenches and gun positions, while they behold their hills torn open to emplace heavy guns, and the whole countryside stretched with barbed-wire entanglements. Then while they are still dizzy with watching preparations

## FIELD NOTES FROM

of which they understand nothing, their peace and quiet are torn asunder by the tumult of rifle and shell fire.

The quiet little streets, where their people have for centuries bargained and gossiped, are now filled with the flotsam and jetsam of defeat, and intermittent streams of wounded men are poured into their public buildings. Finally comes the first wave of retreat, and for hours their country roads are choked with artillery, transport and angry drivers belabouring the sweating horses. They see their town clogged with weary and exhausted men pausing for a moment's rest; and then suddenly hell breaks loose in the centre of their village, and they see their buildings falling in ruins, with bricks and cement flying in every direction, as the shells of the batteries on the hills miles away come pouring into their town.

That too passes away, and in the still deadness of the cessation from tumult, they wander about their ruins like ants about a broken hill. Then comes the vanguard of the Russians and for days they see nothing but cavalry and infantry in strange uniforms pouring through their streets. And now they too are gone, and the echoes of war have died away. Even yet these people are wandering about the streets in a sort of bewilderment.



Halicz.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

But even in this little town which had the misfortune to be in the path of war's desolating march, there seems no hostility towards the soldiers. No one here was apparently treated badly, and save for the destruction of the centre of their town, which took place in a few minutes, nothing further befell them. As one looks it all over, the pathos of it sinks in. Yet the destruction of a town sheltering troops must, of course, be a military necessity, and as such accepted as legitimate. But it certainly is hard on the peaceful inhabitants.

After lunch with the commandant at Halicz we take train for Lemberg, and expect to sleep there to-night.





# THE WOMEN IN THE WAR



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WOMEN IN THE WAR

VLADIMIR VALENSKY, RUSSIA,

*October 21, 1914.*

EVERY cloud, so the proverb runs, has its silver lining. Surely there can be no greater cloud than the ghastly shadow of war which lies all over Europe to-day, but equally true is it that this one also has its silver lining, a side filled with human sympathy, love and the best instincts of which the race is capable. This, of which I would write a few lines, is the world of devotion and beauty supplied by the sisterhood of the Red Cross in Russia at war to-day. For several weeks now we have travelled constantly amidst scenes of war and the wreckage that man has created among his fellows, and there has not been a day in all these weeks that the picture has not been softened by the presence everywhere of the gentle womanhood of this country, ministering to the smitten, and alleviating the suffering of those who have fallen before the tempest of shot and shell that

## FIELD NOTES FROM

has swept across this great zone in which we have been travelling.

As the troops have responded to the call to the colours, so the women and girls have given themselves broadcast to the work of alleviating the misery of the wounded, and of speaking the last low words of love and sympathy to those whose minutes upon this earth are dragging to their appointed end. Most significant of all to the stranger who has been led to believe that Russia is a land of two classes—the aristocrat and the peasant—is the democracy of the women. In response to the appeal to womanhood, there is here no class and no distinction, and one sees princess and humble peasant woman clad in the same sacred robe of the Red Cross. On more than one occasion I have discovered that the quiet, haggard-faced sister, whom I have questioned as to her work among the wounded, was a countess, or a member of the élite of Petrograd's exclusive society.

As my mind runs back over the past days, a number of pictures stands clear in my mind as typical of the class of selfless, high-minded women whom the exigencies of war have called from their luxurious homes to the scenes of war's horrors. In Lemberg, just at twilight, I spent two hours in one of the huge barracks of misery in which were crystallized all the results of man's



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

ingenuity to destroy his fellow. There went with me the round of the wards a woman whose pale face and lines of sadness bespoke the drain on nerve and sympathy that weeks in the hospitals had involved. In her uniform frock and white-faced headgear, with the great red cross of mercy on her bosom, she seemed to typify womanhood at its very best. As we entered each ward every head was turned in her direction. At each bed she paused for a moment to pass a smooth, white hand, soft as silk, across the forehead of some huge, suffering peasant. Again and again the big men would seize her hand and kiss it gently, and as she passed down the line of beds every eye followed her with loving devotion such as one sees in the eyes of a dog.

And in each bed was a story not a detail of which was unknown to the great-hearted gentle woman. Here was a man, she told me, the front of whose head had been smashed in by a shrapnel ball which had coursed down and come out at the back of the neck. "Two weeks ago," she said, "I could put two fingers up to my hand in this man's brain. Yet we have fixed him up and he will recover," and with an adorable movement she stooped quickly and patted the great, gaunt hand that lay upon the coverlet. And so we went from bed to bed. When she at last left me I asked the attending surgeon of her. "Ah,

## FIELD NOTES FROM

yes," he said, "she is here always, and when there is a rush, I have known her to spend fifty hours here without sleep and with little food. Who is she? Countess ——. There are many, many like her here."

Again comes to mind a picture at Rawa Ruska. The street from the station is lined on both sides with hospitals. As I was returning to the hotel last night I paused beside an open window. Inside the room was an operating table, on which, beneath the dull rays of an oil lamp, was stretched the great body of one of Russia's peasant soldiers. This point is near the battle line now, and many of the wounded come almost directly here from the trenches. The huge creature that now lay on the table was without coat, the sleeve of the left arm was rolled to the shoulder, and over him hovered two girls as beautiful as a man could wish to see. The one sitting on a high stool, held in her aproned lap the great, raw stump of bloody flesh that had been a hand, and even in the dull light one could see the smears of red upon her apron. As she tenderly held the hand, she spoke in a low and gentle voice to the soldier, whose compressed lips showed the pain his wound was costing, although no groan or murmur escaped him. The other girl, kneeling by his side, was sponging the hideous member with the gentleness of a mother handling a baby.





Correspondents' Special Train.

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

As we stood out in the darkened street and viewed this picture, framed by the window-sash, of the two girls, unconscious of observation as they tenderly cared for the broken hulk, there came the realization of the sympathy and tenderness of woman, a sympathy akin to the divine, which lies ingrained deep, deep down in the fibre of every woman.

Down by the station when we went aboard our cars, and on the adjoining track, was a hospital train, just in from the front. The day's wounded had been transferred to the hospital, and through the little square window, by the light of a candle in a bottle, we saw two tired Red Cross girls eating a sandwich before going out again on the night train to the front. These, and hundreds and thousands of such, are all over the districts where fighting has occurred. This is the real womanhood of Russia, and he who sees them in their thousands cannot but feel a great and earnest confidence in the future of a country that produces such women.





THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST OF  
GALICIA



## CHAPTER IX

### THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST OF GALICIA

HEADQUARTERS OF THE RUSSIAN GENERAL STAFF,

October 22, 1914.

*(More particular identification forbidden by  
Censor.)*

HAD Russia been fighting Austria alone in this war, the whole world would have been ringing for the last two months with the account of vast operations, magnificent strategy, and battles which in size and extent have never before been known in the world's history. But with the coming of the war here, there broke also the great cloud all over Europe, and the details and scope of this remarkable campaign have, as it seems to me, been completely overshadowed by the nearer and better understood operations in the country of Western Europe, which is much more intimately known to Englishmen and to Americans. While England and the United States were hanging with bated breath on the invasion of Belgium and

## FIELD NOTES FROM

the subsequent movements in France, the situation in Galicia received scant attention, and barring occasional reports of the capture of towns, the names of which were hardly familiar to us, very little news came from this zone.

It seems, therefore, appropriate at this time to sketch briefly and simply what has been done down here by Russia and how she has done it. But before beginning the narrative, in justice to the writer it must be explained that he is still attached to the General Staff of the Russian Army, with such regulations governing written matter sent out, that nothing like a definite story of movements of troops can be written even now. If in this chapter I can show merely the greater strategy and plan so as to make intelligible the general scope of the movements, all that at this time and from this place is now possible will have been accomplished. It must be remembered, however, that numbers of troops, army corps, exact positions, and anything, in fact, that can possibly be of the smallest benefit to the enemy, have been ruled out, and any possible ambiguities in what follows must be charged by the reader to the exigencies of the case. With the mere statement that the operations against Austria involved the movement of more than a million of Russian troops against about a million of Austrians and Hungarians, it will be under-



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

stood that the scale of the campaign was enormous.

At the commencement of the war the invasion began from three different directions, and the Russian troops were formed into three great groups, each composing many army corps, the total aggregating twenty. These movements started from three bases. Brussilov from the extreme east, with his base on Odessa, crossed the boundary formed by the river Zbrucz (local spelling), with his central corps on the line of the railroad at Wotoczyska, and commenced his march on Lwow (Lemberg), which is the strategic centre of central Galicia. Simultaneously Russky's army started with its innumerable army corps and auxiliary troops, having Kiev for its base. These divisions crossed the frontier with their centre on the line of railroad running from Radziwitow through Brody and Krasne to Lemberg.

The last great group of army corps, commanded by Ewerts, had its base on Brest-Litowsk, and moved south via Lublin to drive out the opposing Austrians in their front, and take the whole in the flank. This, in a very broad and general way, was the movement planned and the general scheme of strategy, which, it may be said, was carried out to the letter. The greatest weakness of Russia at the start of the hostilities was in

## FIELD NOTES FROM

her lack of strategic lines of railroad. If one takes a map of Galicia, it will be observed that the Austrian Government has numerous lines which run to the frontier of Russia and then stop. This enabled the Austrians to mass troops almost instantly. The Russians, on the other hand, had few such lines, and the result was that the initial operations were much more difficult than they would otherwise have been. Time, in war, is the chief factor of the whole enterprise. Had Russia had more railheads at the frontier, she would no doubt have swept Eastern Galicia before the Austrians could have concentrated in any great force. But the lack of such facilities enabled the enemy to prepare defences hurriedly at many points, and to contest the Russian advance at every step. The opinion in England and in the United States also, seems to have been that the Austrian troops were inferior, and that Russian advances were due largely to the weakness of her enemy. Those who have travelled over the field of operations, and read in the page of abandoned battlefields the tale of stubborn resistance, must change their views about the Austrians, and at the same time admit the remarkable impetuosity and courage of the Russian troops, who, against enormous obstacles, tore their way through a clever and ferocious resistance. The army of Brussilov was the most distant from the



Galician Peasants.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

strategic centre aimed at (Lemberg), and hence had the farthest to go, and perhaps in the early days the hardest fighting. The Austrians, with their superior railway facilities, were able to prepare a preliminary line of resistance to this army, along the bluffs and high ground between the forks of the stream known on local maps as Ztota Lippa, and here they made their first stand, a battle which in any other war would have taken columns to describe, but which in this struggle falls into the class of a mere skirmish.

From this point the Austrians fell back on a second line of defence, and one which was, in fact, an extremely strong one. This was the hills and ridges east of the river called Gnita Lippa. By the time this position was reached by the Russians, Brussilov's left was in touch with Russky's right that had crossed the boundary around Radziwitow. The position now defended by the Austrians extended from the town of Halicz on the Dniester river, which was the Russian southern flank, in a practically unbroken line through and north of Krasne. The battle which was engaged over this extended line lasted for periods, in different parts of the position, of eight to ten days in the south, to nearly two weeks on the Krasne position itself.

The Austrian line was a very strong one and



## FIELD NOTES FROM

was defended with an intelligence and vigour which for days on end promised to thwart utterly the Russian efforts to break through. Trenches by the mile, with bombproofs, barbed-wire entanglements, and all the other devices of modern field fortifications had been erected to block the advance of the invading troops. Modern field guns, machine guns and field howitzers were all turned against the Russians, and their losses were undoubtedly very heavy. Some of the details of the general line were contested for eight and nine days, being now taken by one side and now by the other, with each assault and counter-assault leaving the piled-up heaps of the dead and wounded in its wake. All this time Ewerts' numerous army corps were slowly pressing down from their base on Brest Litowsk, driving back heavy forces of the Austrians. But these columns were not determining factors in the first big fight before Lemberg. It was the collapse of the Austrian defence towards the south of the line that broke down the first big Austrian stand on their main line of defences. Heavy masses of them fled via Halicz, blowing up a fine steel bridge in their retreat. But the Russians, in spite of their days of incessant marching and heavy fighting, were not to be denied, and, throwing a pontoon bridge over the river, followed up their victory.



Transport fording a River in Poland: remains of destroyed Bridge can be seen in the Foreground.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

This movement threatened to envelop the whole Austrian right, as a glance at the map will show, and rendered the defence still going on around Krasne no longer tenable. Orders were therefore hurriedly given for the abandonment of that hard-fought field. It must be understood however, in justice to the Austrians, that, even after thirteen days of resisting the Russians, their line in this part of the field was not broken, nor even severely shaken ; and their retirement was due to the strategical exigencies created by Brussilov's enveloping movement on the south. The Austrians then evacuated their base at Lwow (Lemberg), and without offering any further resistance in the city, retired to their newly-created and even stronger position extending through Grodek and north to Rawa Ruska. Here, for the first time, all the Russian armies were in touch, as all the Austrians were also. Ewerts and his numerous corps had forced back his antagonists to the line between Rawa Ruska and Bitgoraj. This then presented an enormous front, with all the armies of both sides in touch with each other, and all engaged practically at the same time. It is difficult to form more than the merest approximate estimate of numbers engaged, but it is safe to put the total on both sides as above 2,500,000.

This battle, the details of which are so little

## FIELD NOTES FROM

known, was without doubt the hardest fought struggle, and on the most gigantic scale that the war had seen up to the time when it took place. Ewerts on the north would not be denied his advance, and his repeated assaults on the Austrians resulted in bending in their left day by day until their line was bent into a right angle, with Rawa Ruska on the north-eastern corner. Here for eight days a battle raged which the annals of history certainly cannot up to this time duplicate, for the ferocity and bitterness of attack, and the stubbornness and courage of the defence. The Austrians, let it be said, were in an extremely strong position round this quaint little town, and were prepared to defend themselves to the last ditch, which in fact they did to the letter. At the extreme corner of the defence, which I suppose one might call the strategic centre of the whole battle—if one place in so huge an amphitheatre can be picked out—they fought for six days with an endurance which was almost incredible.

Here there are no less than eight lines of defence in little more than a mile. Each of these was held to the last minute, and some of them changed hands several times before the Russians came finally over them. Each trench tells its own story of defence. Piles and piles of empty cartridges, accoutrements and knick-knacks are



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

heaped in every ditch. Right across the field between their positions, is written their hurried change of line, with new graves and hundreds of haversacks scattered in between. Then comes another trench with the same signs of patient endurance under shot and shell. The last and strongest position of all before the final collapse is a place to make the blood curdle. By this time the Russians had brought up their heavy field howitzers, and when they finally got the range, they literally destroyed the whole position. One can walk for hundreds of yards stepping from one shell hole into another, each five feet deep and perhaps ten feet across. One can pick up the dirt of the trenches and sift the shrapnel balls out in handfuls. And yet even here the Austrians hung on for a time, as the mute evidence of the field too clearly tells. In every direction from each shell hole is strewn the fragments of blue cloth of the Austrian uniform, torn into shreds and ribbons by the force of the explosive; and all about the field are still bits of arms, a leg in a boot, or some other ghastly token of soldiers, true to discipline, hanging on to a position that was alive with bursting shells and flying shrapnel.

Beyond this line was the artillery position of the Austrians, and here again we find heaps upon heaps of brass shrapnel shells, with shattered

## FIELD NOTES FROM

wheels and splinters of caissons in every direction. This last stand finally caved in, and the next field, dotted with dead horses, shows where the remnant of the Austrian artillery took its way. The Austrians never had a chance to make a stand in the town itself, and with its loss came the dissolution of the whole defence along the entire line of battle, and what was really an overwhelming disaster to the cause of the Dual Monarchy. The Austrian army here split in two. While it is an advantage for victorious armies to have separate bases, it is anything but desirable for an army in defeat, for naturally each fragment falls back on its own line of communications. This is what actually happened here at this time. The Hungarian corps on the Austrian right retired through the Carpathian passes, while the Austrians fell back in confusion on Cracow, with the Russians taking Yaroslav on their heels. This, then, was the first great phase of the invasion of Galicia. The Russians at the conclusion of this part of the campaign held Galicia up to the river San and Yaroslav, and had swept everything in this zone before them with the exception of the fortified position of Przemyśl, which as I write still forms a strong position in the present Austrian line. So much for the purely military aspect. Let us now turn to the methods of the Russians and the



Transport crossing a River in Poland, the Bridge having been destroyed by the Germans.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

manner of their behaviour while in a conquered country.

The Russians, after six weeks of campaigning, were left in absolute control of the whole of Galicia, up to a line running from the Carpathians on the south, through Przemysl and along the river San to the important town of Yaroslav. If one goes back over this campaign and studies out the movements from the start of the war, one cannot but be enormously impressed with the remarkable achievement accomplished by the Russian Army in a comparatively short campaign. Starting from widely separated bases, with meagre railway facilities, they manœuvred three giant armies, each composed of many corps and all working in general union, and achieved, without one effective setback, a series of victories of enormous magnitude. They did this in the face of an enemy whom history will show to have been by no means weak. The theory that Austria was a web of factions that would dissolve at the first impact, and the belief that her troops would not fight, has been absolutely disproved ; and it serves to magnify the achievements of the soldiers of the Czar, when we accord to the Austro-Hungarian Army the credit which is due to its courageous defence and the stubborn resistance put up at every favourable opportunity.



## FIELD NOTES FROM

My opinion is that no troops could have made a braver resistance than was offered in many instances by the defeated army. I walked over one position which the Austrians held for a day in a stubble field with no defences whatever save the few inches deep pits that each man dug out for himself. For a mile the pathetic evidence of their determination to stick was visible on every hand. An unbroken line of accoutrements and fragments of shells mark the position where they held on absolutely without any shelter. Right in the centre of this hideous zone was a crossing of the roads, and there stands to-day a moss-grown old cross which for a century perhaps has received the reverence of the passing peasant. All through this terrible day, the carved figure of the Christ upon the cross looked down upon the dying and wounded. The top of the wooden upright was shattered with a bit of shell, while one arm of the figure of Christ was carried away by a shrapnel fragment. Could anything be more incongruous than this pathetic figure of Him, who came to spread peace and goodwill among men, looking down to-day on a field sown with mangled corpses? At the very foot of the cross is a newly-made grave and a rude wooden sign nailed upon the monument itself: "Here lie the bodies of 121 Austrian warriors and four Russian warriors of the —th regiment."





**Cross with Figure partly shattered by Shell Fire.**



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

After the terrible fighting that had gone on for weeks, there followed a period of recuperation and refilling of the wastage of both armies. The Russians engaged the forts of Przemysl and took the town of Sambor, and rested for a little. In the meantime the Austrians, encouraged by their German allies, were making frantic efforts to pull themselves together. The fragments of the army that had escaped through the passes of the Carpathians were taken by rail to Cracow, while the army that went that way was reinforced and stiffened up, and the whole reorganized and whipped into shape for further operations. The view that the heart of the Austrian army had been destroyed was now contradicted, for shortly after the 10th of October they again showed signs of life. We hear that their left in Cracow joins the German right, and that many German army corps are united with them there. Rumour among us also says that the German Staff is in command of all their present operations. In any case, the second phase of the Galician war is now in full blast.

The Austrians began this by a terrific attack on Sambor, which was held by the Russians. Their impetus was so great that for several days it seemed possible that the Russians might be dislodged permanently from their hard-won position on their left flank. Indeed at Lemberg, where

## FIELD NOTES FROM

the guns could plainly be heard, there were constant rumours of Austrian victories. But their offensive ultimately failed, and the tide of battle gradually ebbed from round Sambor, and the interest shifted to a point which is between Sambor and Przemyśl. Here the Austrians concentrated a number of army corps, less than four, and made a heroic effort to break the Russian line, with the idea of taking Lemberg, which was a practicable scheme, entirely dependent on the success of their attack. For a day or so their efforts seemed to be showing results, and a number of the hospitals in Lemberg were ordered to be in readiness for an instant removal. But this also failed, and also the Sambor movement, with a dreadful loss to the Austrians in dead and wounded, besides more than 5,000 prisoners taken by the Russians.

• While this action was at its height, the combined Austrians and Germans delivered a stroke against Yaroslav, which the Russians had been holding since the days following the retirement of the Austrians from their Rodek-Rawa Ruska line. The details of this battle are not known to us, and indeed, the action is still under way as I am writing these lines. From what we gather, however, the Germans, after occupying Yaroslav, were driven out by the Russians in a terrible counter-attack, and since then have made



Church destroyed by Artillery. Note the Cross untouched.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

no headway whatsoever. In a word, the movements of the Austro-German united armies in this last effort to wrest Galicia from the Russians seem now to have been absolutely futile. For three days we were travelling just in the rear of the Russian line, and during all that time the cannonading was terrible and without intermission. We are too near the operations, both from the point of view of distance and time, to get any real perspective of the general situation ; but at the time of writing it seems safe to venture the statement that the Dual Alliance have shot their bolt on this frontier, and that hereafter there will be no serious opportunity for them to regain the territory which they lost in Galicia.

The fortress of Przemyśl still holds out and may very well last until the end of hostilities. It is strongly defended, and will take a lot of battering before its capture can be effected.

What I have written of the military situation in Galicia is, I believe, approximately a correct outline of the general movements. It is almost impossible to get more than a very general idea of how things have actually happened, except in a very hazy way. The fighting has extended over such an enormous area, the numbers engaged have been so large, and the units of command have been so numerous, that nothing like an accurate account can be given until the re-

## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

ports of the various commanders on both sides are to hand and can be digested.

The general fact remains, however, that Russia has in two months handled an army of more than a million of men with no serious setbacks, and is to-day occupying the richest and best portion of the fertile province of Galicia.

WARSAW



## CHAPTER X

### WARSAW

WARSAW, POLAND,

*October 25, 1914.*

THE carefully-picked delegation of personally conducted war correspondents was returned to the headquarters of the General Staff of all the Russian armies two days ago; and a council of war was held as to what was to be done next with the impatient band of international white elephants who were caged in the two special cars on the headquarters' siding in the railway yard. At three in the afternoon we were all taken to the sanctum of the potentates of strategy, and instructed as to our next move. Three of our number were missing from this trip owing to causes over which they apparently had no control; and when we gathered in the private saloon of the Chief of Staff we learned that one among us had committed an indiscretion, and was already on his way to Petrograd, while two others are not to make the next trip.



## FIELD NOTES FROM

The Russian correspondents, it appears, are dissatisfied with our travels in many lands. They had all set their respective hearts on mingling with the soldiers in the trenches, and taking notes amidst the bursting of shell and the melancholy "ping" of rifle bullets. As soon as the meeting was called to order by the Chief of Staff, they all began to talk at once, employing their best line of enthusiastic utterances and three at a time. When the discussion had finished, and he who had already made the plans had an opening, we were smilingly and politely informed what the plans were; and it was gently but pointedly added that if the programme was unsatisfactory no one was under any obligation to go at all. On the contrary, the road to Petrograd was in working order, and an express train was available for the use of the dissatisfied who cared to make a comfortable and expeditious journey to the place whence we came. After some bubbling of rage and mutterings on the part of the suppressed, we were returned in large, powerful motor-cars to our special car, to await the commencement of our second tour.

After jiggling along in a troop train for nearly thirty hours, we at last arrived at Warsaw about two in the morning. Every one here has had a thoroughly good scare; for nearly eight days the German guns have been thundering away

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

to the west, while German aeroplanes and dirigibles have been flying over the city and dropping bombs promiscuously about the town. There is the most intense indignation here among all classes at the action of the Germans in this matter. Warsaw cannot fairly be considered a fortified city, and during the fighting practically every available soldier was rushed forward to the firing line. Yet for days the aircraft of the Germans sailed over the city, dropping their infernal bombs absolutely without regard to who was killed or what was destroyed in their irresponsible career. The first aircraft that flew over the city dropped pamphlets printed in Polish, in which the population were politely informed that they need anticipate no alarm from explosives dropped in the city, as they were intended merely for use against the soldiers and to destroy public buildings. They were advised to stay within doors while this programme was in progress.

After this reassuring announcement some other airmen proceeded to carry out this promise by dropping bombs quite at random. As near as I can learn, thirty-two were dropped, and the number of killed is placed at fourteen, while from twenty to thirty were wounded by the explosions. It is interesting to note that not one of this number was either a soldier or an

## FIELD NOTES FROM

official of any sort, and that of the property destroyed, which was small, no building was official. The casualty list composes men, women, and children, all absolutely innocent, and having nothing whatever to do with the operations of war. One bomb fell within a few hundred yards of the American Consulate, and just opposite the Hôtel Palonia. Neither of these buildings has the slightest resemblance to a public institution, and the occupants of both were correspondingly indignant at what is regarded here as an outrage. One of the aeroplanes was winged by the Russian soldiers and fell into the street. Of the two men in it, one was killed, while the other, it is said, blew out his brains rather than submit to capture.

Sentiment here is ferocious against the Germans, and, incredible as it may seem, there is more enthusiasm for war manifested in the streets than in any part of the war zone that I have yet visited. Each regiment that passes through on its way to the front receives a perfect ovation from the people. Women run along beside the soldiers handing them food and cigarettes, while they are cheered to the echo at every street corner. It is hard to believe that all this ardour that one sees is coming from Poles, and that the recipients of it are the soldiers of the Czar.

The people of Warsaw have had a great fright,



Austrian Prisoners with their Russian Guard.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

and thousands upon thousands left when the advance of the Germans seemed to make the occupation of the town probable. For eight days the fighting continued to the west of the town ; and now that the armies of the Kaiser have retired, and the sound of their guns has died away, the relief expressed on all sides is intense. Warsaw has resumed its normal aspects, and everybody is going quietly about his or her own business.

The one thing that impresses the observer more and more each day is the sobriety and good behaviour of the Russian troops. I have now been with the army nearly three weeks, and have seen thousands upon thousands of soldiers from all parts of Russia. I have yet to see the first drunken or disorderly man connected with the army, either officer or soldier. The traditional dread of soldiery when armies are spread over a country is absolutely lacking. It is certain that the prohibition of strong drink has worked wonders in the Russian Army, and is one of the great factors responsible for the splendid showing, both in the field and in the cities, that is being made by these armies to-day in both Galicia and in the Polish theatre of war. Of the northern armies I am not in a position to express any opinion.



THE FIRST GERMAN INVASION  
OF POLAND



## CHAPTER XI

### THE FIRST GERMAN INVASION OF POLAND

LOWICZ, POLAND,

*October 27, 1914.*

WE left Warsaw in motor-cars early this morning for a tour over the field where the Russians fought a battle which, in its results, will prove one of the landmarks in the present war. In point of numbers engaged on both sides there have been far larger operations in other theatres of the war, but for definite effects the outcome of the battle before Warsaw cannot be overestimated in its importance. It seems moderately clear now, from evidence available, that this beautiful Polish city on the Vistula was to have been the high-water mark of the German autumn campaign; and with this and the line of the Vistula to Ivangorod occupied for the winter, the Germans could have afforded very well to have rested on their laurels, and to have devoted the bulk of their attention to the French frontier.



## FIELD NOTES FROM

But in their estimate of the psychology of peoples they seem to have failed here as in almost every other zone into which they have carried the war. As they imagined that Belgium would be passive, so also did they conclude that Poland would be at least neutral in her sympathies, and perhaps even more, would actively assist them in a war against Russia. Thus their armies advanced confidently toward Warsaw, jubilant in the idea that after one easy engagement the city would be theirs, and the end of the autumn fighting arrived at. They appear to have allotted to this job, from all their hordes, only five army corps, the bulk of this being formed, as far as one can learn, of reserve and Landsturm men, with a scattering of the first line to stiffen them up. There seems no doubt that at the beginning of the conflict the Russians were greatly outnumbered; but as their line held with stubborn determination, time was given for fresh troops to come up, and for a flanking movement to be launched around the German left wing. The net results of Germany's Polish campaign were, the evacuation of their position against Warsaw and a hurried retirement to the west and south-west. Events that have followed day by day since the retreat started show clearly that Russia is following up her victory here with commendable dispatch. Every



A Cossack Patrol entering a Polish Village during the German Retreat.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

morning we hear of towns abandoned by the Germans and positions evacuated.

As I have written before, it is extremely difficult to judge of operations over so vast a scale save in a very general way. News is jealously guarded, and among the rumours and private advices that pour in from all sides, it is difficult to pick the absolute truth out of the mass of reports that one receives. It is clear, however, that the German programme here, up to the date of writing, is an unmitigated failure, and that they are now retiring as speedily as possible, stopping only to fight rearguard actions, in order to delay the Russian advance sufficiently to permit them to get out of this theatre of war with their transport and guns with a fair margin of safety. The actions in the zone which I have been through to-day might in a lesser conflict be treated as important battles; but considering the numbers engaged and the character of the resistance, one must, I believe, conclude that the stands made, though vigorous and resulting in desperate fighting and heavy losses, are now merely to protect the retreat on some line where a definite stand will be made. Where this will be is merely a matter of speculation, and one can estimate it as easily in London as here.

The Warsaw action once lost, it was clear and logical that Germany would do just as she is doing.

## FIELD NOTES FROM

Certainly it would have been madness to try further campaigning in Poland, which, contrary to their anticipation, is bitterly hostile to them. The significance and benefit of this campaign here cannot be sufficiently rejoiced in by the Allies of Russia ; for it means, as we within our limited perspective here read it, the first complete failure and reversal of programme that Germany has encountered since the war began. The second important point is the effect that it has had upon the Russian soldiers. Their *moral* has increased a hundred per cent, and any apprehensions they may have had with regard to their ability to withstand the German legions have been dissipated for all time. The enormous prestige which the soldiers of the Kaiser have enjoyed is gone, and the report of their superiority over Russian troops has been proved to be a fiction. The Russians in their first days of fighting around Warsaw showed their mettle ; and no doubt the Germans now realize that they have been badly informed as to the nature of the enemy who, they were told, would be an easy prey to their advancing columns. The German retirement must have a very depressing effect upon the invading army ; it is certainly encouraging to the soldiers of the Czar and to the great bulk of the people of Poland itself.

We had not been an hour out of Warsaw on our



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

journey,, before another thing became clear to all of us who have ever known the life of an army in time of war ; namely, that Russia is at last under way in this campaign, and that the huge engine of her organization is moving with a tremendous momentum. Never have I seen sights which could be more encouraging to an ally, and impressive to the citizen of a neutral country, than those I see daily. The highways for miles and miles are packed with the preparations for an advance in every quarter. Transport, Red Cross supplies, and miles upon miles of ammunition trains, are all moving to the various fronts with a precision and orderliness that must for ever dissipate the idea that Russian organization is lacking when it comes to the final test. The whole nation is aroused at last, and one may well hope that from now on, the Allies will find Russia crowding ever closer on the German frontier. If the Germans are to stem this rising tide even for a moment, they must speedily release troops from the Western frontier, or find themselves overrun with the well-drilled and disciplined armies of Russia, under perfect control, and conducting themselves, as far as the observer can see, with the greatest tact and friendliness alike to population and prisoners and the wounded of the enemy.

We have seen numbers of captured prisoners,

## FIELD NOTES FROM

and among every lot is a sprinkling of the blue coats of the Austrians; this lends colour to the rumours which we hear on every hand, that the Germans have detached regiments of their own to stiffen up their allies in the south, and taken regiments in return which they have placed in their own line. It is reported that in the engagements in this vicinity, the Germans graciously allotted to their allies the places of honour in the firing line, where the glory, and incidentally the death rate, was the greatest. But this I can only repeat as gossip and hearsay. It is certain that there are Austrian prisoners, wounded, and dead.

The German line has now retired more than a hundred kilometres from their high-water mark, and is in places not much above that distance from their own frontier. As far as one can make out, the Russians are not far from Lodz, which one day we hear has been occupied and the next, is in the hands of the Germans. It is difficult to hit upon the truth, though private advices received here state emphatically that Lodz has been evacuated. In any event, that contingency, which spells the last important city in their hands between Warsaw and Kalisz, is hourly expected, and no doubt will have come to pass by the time this chapter is read in London.

After touring about all day in a motor-car one begins to realize that the good people of



Stanley Washburn chatting with German and Austrian Prisoners in Poland.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

Warsaw had excellent reasons for apprehensions lest their fair city should fall into German hands. We are told that for eight days the windows shook and rattled with the concussion of artillery fire ; and what with that and the interest of bombs falling from above, and machine guns and enterprising infantry soldiers in the streets firing at the aeroplanes, one can well believe that life here was filled with the spice of the uncertain. One gets but a few kilometres out of Warsaw, when the signs of the devastation of war become increasingly evident. Dead horses lie about in the fields, houses wrecked with shell fire are everywhere, and the inevitable trenches and rifle pits in every direction.

It is evident from the great holes in the ground that the Germans had some of their big guns with them, and were doing their best to get into the city whose chimneys and spires loomed alluringly just over the rolling prairieland dotted with its beautiful groves of trees. I noticed one quaint, old-fashioned windmill, just outside the town, that had been wrecked by a single shell. Its great blades lay on the ground like the wings of a bird, while the whole edifice had collapsed about it like a house of cards. The highway, which is a magnificent one, was torn up with holes where the projectiles had burst, and this made travelling in a motor-car difficult at any speed.



## FIELD NOTES FROM

Near Blonie we left the main road to visit a small village with an unpronounceable Polish name where, as we were informed, typical fighting had taken place. The outlying houses were destroyed by shell fire, and in the midst of the wreckage were the ruins of a quaint old church. This the Russians had spared until the last, but finally opened on it because the Germans mounted a machine gun in the beautiful old tower. The neutral observer, no matter what his personal sympathies may be, feels an obligation to investigate somewhat carefully evidence coming from a source which must obviously be prejudiced; and I therefore scouted about a bit to discover whether or not the evidence of the field substantiated this action on the part of the Germans. To the east of the town, about a thousand yards away, within pleasant machine-gun range, one comes upon a huge grave in which are buried three hundred Russian soldiers. Before this grave are five small crosses, and in advance of the five stands one large cross commemorating the colonel, the five captains and the men of five companies. Around this desolate spot I found a number of relics, and among them four or five Russian infantry caps, in which were bullet holes in the crown. Looking from the graves to the tower of the church I discovered that the angle was exactly correct to catch the infantry on the top of their



Graves of Russian Officers killed during the Fighting near Warsaw.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

heads. It was here that the three hundred fell, and doubtless the statement of the machine guns on the church may be taken at its face value. The Russians at once replied, and from appearances it is safe to conclude that the machine gun on the tower ceased its operations abruptly.

In any case only the walls are standing, while the interior of the nave is a mass of refuse, fallen timber and shattered masonry. On one side is a great shell hole ten feet across, and just opposite, framed by this ragged rupture in the masonry, is a huge crucifix. A shrapnel shell had burst just above it, and the wall for five feet in every direction was dotted with shrapnel holes, while not a shot had hit the sacred figure. In a garden across the street, hurriedly-dug graves revealed arms, legs, and occasionally the head of one who had fallen in the contest round the church. At one point I noticed a cross on which was written in German, "Here lie the bodies of twelve Russian warriors who fell fighting bravely." It is one increasingly pleasant feature of this side of the war that the belligerents are coming to respect the bravery of one another's soldiers.

At noon we lunched in the station at Blonie, which, as we learn, was the headquarters of the commanders of one of the German army corps, and probably the nearest point to the goal of the Polish campaign reached by any of the com-

## FIELD NOTES FROM

manding Generals. From here we went on in a pouring rain to an army corps' headquarters, a town now alive with the activities of the near front. This little place is filled with Jews, a section of the population which is, as we are told, unfriendly to the Russians. Here, it seems, when the Germans were in the town, they were received with delight by the Hebrew population, and disgust by the Poles. When the Germans were forced to retire, the position of the Jews was not a happy one, as the Poles lost no time in telling the Russians of the open friendliness their neighbours had shown the Germans. Hence the Hebrews are under suspicion by the present lords of the town, who attribute every act of hostility to them.

Here we are not far from the front, as the transport and fresh wounded make evident. Numbers of German prisoners were being captured all along the line, and we saw many of them. Three Uhlans on foot and two wounded in a cart passed by, escorted by some Cossacks. After all the stirring stories of the dreaded Uhlans, it was something of an anticlimax to see a few tired-faced boys in uniform, as types of the cavalry that we have heard so much about. Later, on the road, we passed some hundreds of Germans, captured during the fighting of the past few days. All of them looked fagged and depressed,





Uhlans captured by the Cossacks.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

and practically all were of the second and third German line, with the exception of a very few who were mere boys. It is obvious that over here we are confronted with anything but the cream of the German Army, and that they have forced every male capable of bearing arms into the firing line. From the faces of those that I have seen, instruments of the system of which they are the unhappy victims, they are not on fire about the programme, to say the least.

From the headquarters village we motored on to Lowicz, from which the Germans have been recently ousted. The town is full of troops, and it was difficult to find lodgings, but thanks to the kindness of a Russian officer, we secured shelter and a place to sleep.



## A REARGUARD ACTION





## CHAPTER XII

### A REARGUARD ACTION

SKIERNIEWICE, POLAND,

*October, 28, 1914.*

WE motored over to this pretty little Polish city from Lowicz this morning and have had a very interesting day. We are hard on the trail of the retreating Germans, but it takes a motor-car very nearly at its best to keep up with the retreat which is moving as rapidly as getting out their guns and transport permits. The Russians occupied this town only a few days ago, but already the front has advanced something over thirty kilometres. This place, however, is the immediate base to which the wounded are coming, and was therefore alive with soldiers, transport going out, and the flotsam and jetsam of battle coming back. The Germans blew up all the bridges as they retired, so that we had to take carriages that could ford the streams where motors were impossible.

The country through here is beautiful, and the roads splendid, so we travelled rapidly. On every

## FIELD NOTES FROM

hand there were signs of the German intention to make stands in order to delay the Russian advance. At one point, about ten kilometres from Skierniewice, an extremely elaborate position had been prepared with the thoroughness which marks all the German field work. Trees had been felled across the road which presented a veritable abatis for the advance of artillery. Along the ridge deep trenches and gun positions had been thrown up. The whole presented as ideal a position for defence as one could imagine, with a clear sweep for gun fire as far as field artillery could possibly carry. Yet they never stopped even a day at this point; and it is now perfectly clear that their present policy is one of absolute withdrawal, with only such stands as are necessary to permit them to get conveniently out of the country with their impedimenta.

For another hour we drove on, and then came suddenly over a ridge on to the position itself. The battle at this point, which seems to have been a typical rearguard action, was just over; and the last belated shells of the retiring enemy were bursting sporadically to the west of us, with an occasional puff of shrapnel to the south, to indicate that we were close on the heels of the troops. The little village behind the position was alive with the activities that one always finds at the extreme front; Red Cross wagons,



A Battlefield in Poland.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

transport, wounded being carried back on stretchers, and the thousand and one odds and ends of confusion that go to make up the fringe of war. Behind the village, six horses to the team, with drivers lolling in their saddles chatting and smoking, were drawn up the limbers of two batteries; while off in a dip in the country to the north were three or four battalions of reserves. The inhabitants were just beginning to come out of their holes, and everybody was comparing notes as to the damage done by the German shell fire. Here and there a wrecked house or a dead horse slashed open with a fragment of shell, attracted little groups of the natives, who excitedly discussed it all.

The street was congested with soldiers, wounded, transport, and men, women, and children of the population. Just at the outskirts of the town one came on the position itself, with the long lines of trenches, and here and there hurriedly-erected bombproofs for the officers. The soldiers, after their fight, were just coming out of their burrows and comparing their experiences. Across the main road to the north were the Russian gun positions, with the long, sleek noses of the field guns showing out of their earth embrasures; while the gunners were packing up their used shell cases, and the officers were making up their daily reports of ammunition

## FIELD NOTES FROM

expended and losses incurred. Farther to the north was another line of trenches, and, beyond that, more guns. This particular action in an ordinary campaign might be worth notice, but in this stupendous conflict it must go down as merely one of the thousand details which make up a campaign over a front measured in extent by hundreds of kilometres.

The fight in question was a German rearguard action which detained the Russians but a day or two. These fights are typical of all. Troops piled forward and entrenched; artillery shoved up into position, and then a rain of shell fire on the enemy, until the moment is ripe for the infantry to take their turn with the bayonet. The fighting in this district indicates a good bit of this work done, and a few thousand metres beyond the trenches there is a wood which the Russians carried with a bayonet charge which was actually carried home, as some 300 German dead showed conclusively. When the action had finished, the troops that had borne the brunt of it remained on the field, while fresh ones were moved forward to take care of the next day's fighting farther to the west.

The statement which has been made repeatedly, that the Germans are robbing the cradle and the grave to fill their firing line, seems justified by the evidence in the wood above mentioned.

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

From the military record book of one soldier torn to fragments by a bit of shell appeared the date of his birth—"1900." Certainly it is indicative of strenuous efforts at recruiting, when boys of fourteen are in the line performing the work of grown men. Others were between thirty and forty, from which one must conclude that a very large portion of the army that is now retiring is composed of the second and third line. I neither heard of nor saw Austrian dead, wounded, or prisoners, in this vicinity.

A few miles to the west we came on a village that lay in the wake of the German retreat, burned to the ground; probably as the result of shell fire and subsequent spreading of the flames. Here and there a dead horse or cow lying about in the front yards indicated that shrapnel had been flying. It was just getting dark as we entered the village; and here as elsewhere near the front the inhabitants, stunned with the disaster that had befallen them, were wandering about among the ruins. Women with babies in their arms sat in a kind of dazed bewilderment on the sills of doors which were all that remained of what had been their homes but yesterday. Cows were wandering aimlessly about, trying to find the former byres where at just this hour they had been wont to come to be milked and bedded down for the night. These sights are all very

## FIELD NOTES FROM

painful, but are, I suppose, of the inevitable consequences of war.

These destroyed villages, in almost every instance, I believe, are the outcome of rallies made by the retiring troops and resulting shell fire by the pursuing victors. When these stands are made, it is, of course, the only recourse of the Russians to shell them out of their temporary shelter. For a country however which has been the scene of so much fighting I find this in exceptionally good condition. The abundance of live stock on every hand certainly indicates that the Germans have not wantonly looted the villages through which their armies have now passed twice. Even burned villages are comparatively rare.

One naturally expected restraint from the Germans in their advance, for no sound general would permit his soldiery to incur the hatred of a population which he was leaving in his rear. But that the same policy of restraint, excepting a few isolated instances, should have been followed in a retreat after a collapse of the campaign, indicates pretty clearly that the Germans have seen a new light as to the methods of conducting warfare. Perhaps the fact that we have over here larger numbers of reserves and Landsturm men has some significance as well; for the older men who are married and have families of their own





German Prisoner and his Russian Guard.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

in Germany, are much less apt to run rampant with the torch than the boys of the first line, to whom war is a great adventure. Perhaps also the respect for a brave and stubborn enemy which is growing up on both sides, is doing a great deal to lessen the personal bitterness which characterized the war at its beginning. Certainly I have seen or heard nothing here or in the Galician country which can in any way be compared to the campaign conducted by the Germans in Belgium.

Realization is no doubt creeping in, that after all Europe has some future when the war is over, and the family of nations on the Continent have eventually got to live together on terms of peace. I think it a very excellent sign, then, that the hatred and personal bitterness on each side, which gave every soldier the lust and ambition to cut the throat of each individual of the enemy he met, is gradually fading away into the legitimate aim of war. The close intermingling of soldiers and population of foreign countries certainly brings a realization to each, that after all the enemy are but men like themselves, neither much better nor much worse. Thus, in mutual respect and association, there grows up throughout a war a feeling which, when peace actually comes, will make possible better relations than existed in the period preceding hostilities. As examples of

## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

this, witness the present relations just now of Russia and Japan, or England and the Boers. The feeling I mention, which is, I believe, slowly and subtly developing in all the armies over here, is one of the few bright spots in a conflict which reeks with horrors and misery.

A RELIGIOUS SERVICE ON THE  
FIELD OF BATTLE









Service on the Battlefield: a Prayer.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A RELIGIOUS SERVICE ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE

WARSAW, POLAND,

*November 1, 1914.*

HE who tries to understand the psychology of the millions of simple soldiers of the Czar now with the colours, and overlooks the spiritual aspect of these humble privates, certainly fails to appreciate one of the keynotes in the character of the men who are carrying forward the honour and the banners of Russia towards a victorious consummation of the war. I never began to realize this extraordinary quality of the Russian soldier, until by rare good luck we happened a few days ago on services which were being held on the battlefield near a certain village in Western Poland.

The sun had set and the whole landscape was fading into the neutral tints of the afterglow of a cold afternoon in late October. A few hundred yards to the west was the line of the Russian trenches and the position of their field artillery,

## FIELD NOTES FROM

whose guns were hardly cool from the discharge of shrapnel shells. The last stretcher-bearers were disappearing to the rear with their melancholy burdens, while in a wood a few miles away the still bleeding bodies of the enemy's dead were stiffening in death. A few kilometres beyond, belated shells, like the last fire cracker in a pack, were bursting at infrequent intervals. The battle was over, and here we saw the change from the militant to the religious. The regiment in question was one of those from Siberia whose deeds of valour in eighteen days of consecutive fighting reduced its numbers from 4,000 to 1,700, and its officers from 70 to 12. The fame of their endurance and prodigies of courage had trickled back to the General Staff, and the Grand Duke had himself sent a wire of congratulations to the regiment, and ordered that it should be decorated with the Cross of St. George, the nearest equivalent to the V.C. which Russian tradition offers. This order is given only for bravery in action. Representing the regiment so honoured, forty soldiers, selected by their own comrades, receive the cherished little metal cross with its bit of black and orange ribbon.

The regiment that we now saw in the slowly dying October day had thus been honoured; and almost ere their rifles were cool, were ordered back into a little hollow dip to hear the message



Service on the Battlefield : Soldiers at Prayer.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

of the Commander-in-Chief, to receive their reward, and to participate in religious services conducted by a priest of their own faith.

The scene was one that I shall never forget.

Seventeen hundred war-worn veterans, covered with the mud and dirt of the trenches, massed in a half-square in all the atmosphere of battle. But the hard glint of cruel war was gone from their eyes, and in its place there shone that peculiar exaltation of the religious man in the presence of the chosen representative of his creed.

And such a representative! In the very centre of the square, with the entire staff of the regimental officers grouped bareheaded behind him, stood the most magnificent priest that I have ever seen. With golden hair hanging down to his shoulders, and a head transfigured with the light of one lifted above earthly matters, he stood in all his gorgeous robes before six stacked rifles, the bayonets of which served to support the Holy Bible and the golden cross that symbolizes the Christian faith. With eyes turned in rapture to the cold leaden heavens above him, the priest seemed a figure utterly detached from the earth. Behind him stood a few grimy veterans whose voices made them eligible to aid in the chanting. And on two sides, file upon file, leaning on their rifles with bayonets fixed, stood these sons of Russia's vast domain of steppes and desolation which sweeps from the Ural



## FIELD NOTES FROM

Mountains to the far fringes of the Pacific littoral in Asia.

The service I could not follow, as it was of course in Russian, but the spirit of it, there in the chill twilight upon the battlefield, was such as none could misread. And when there came the benediction, each of the soldiers fell upon his knees and with bended head listened to the sonorous voice that bespoke for them the mercy and kindness of Him who above the roar and tumult of battle and conflicting races yet watches over every one of His own. As they knelt there with their forest of bayonets silhouetted against the sky, it seemed as though the gleaming points must be part of a religious service, and not the type of war's most cruel weapon. The service ended, and then followed a scene almost as impressive. The colonel, a grizzled old warrior, stepped out and in sharp, military sentences ordered from the ranks those of the privates who had been honoured with the Cross of St. George. The men stepped forward and kissed the cross held in the hands of the priest. Next, the forty were formed in a line of twenty, two files deep. An officer then called out certain orders, and at once the sea of bayonets dissolved in a confusion of defiling columns, and at another order reshaped into the whole regiment in column of eights, with the colonel at their head. These then defiled past



Service on the Battlefield: placing Prayer-Book on Bayonets.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

the new Knights of St. George to pay their respects to those among them who had borne the test of fire and of steel.

The first man was the old, grizzled colonel. In his left hand he carried a cane to support a foot which limped from a wound received in Manchuria. As he passed his own privates, he raised his hand in respectful salute. Behind him filed the whole regiment, company after company, each paying the respect that manhood renders to fortitude and bravery crowned by official recognition. And all the while the forty chosen ones stood with radiant faces, their rifles at the present. Here we saw them file past, these ragged, war-stained men from Siberia, and a finer body of troops more representative of their craft has never come before my eyes. Dirty, bearded, and jingling with their teapots, spades, and soldiers' knick-knacks, they moved slowly past their companions whom they had chosen to honour as types of their own bravery. When the last company had passed, the deep, stern tones of the colonel rang out, and at once the regiment dissolved into its companies, each of which returned to the place in the trenches from whence it had come to participate in this remarkable meeting. After it was over, I strolled along the lines and there sank into my mind the realization that these simple men had gone back to their trenches armed with a faith

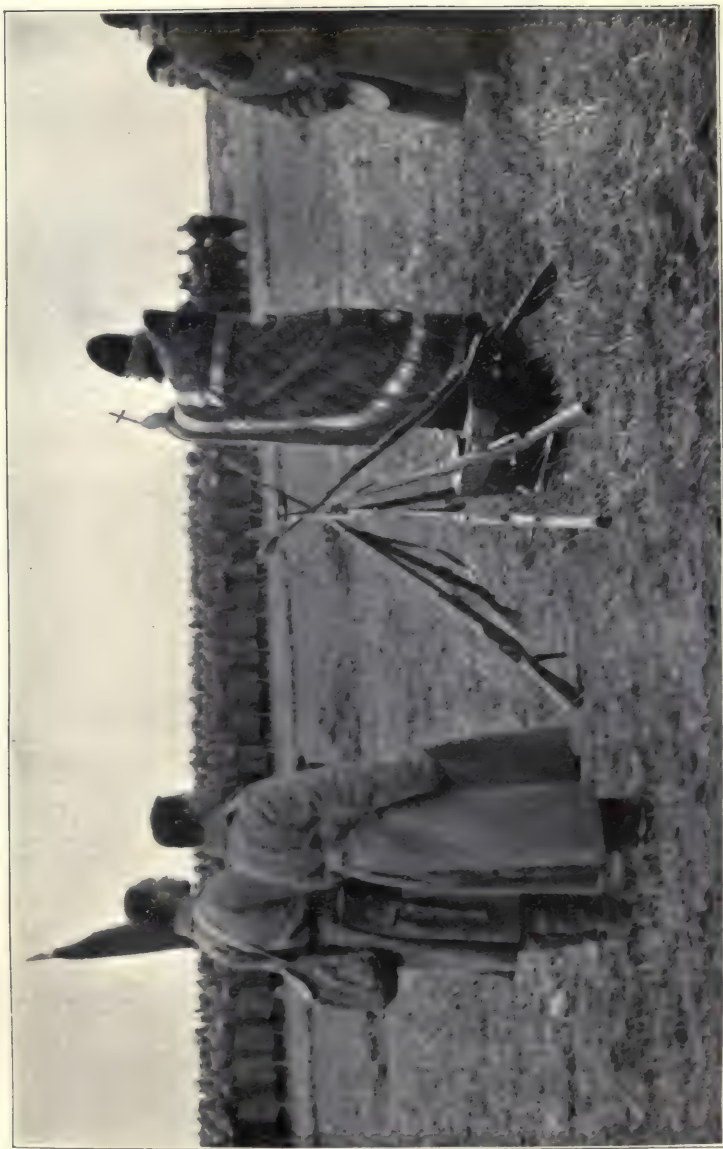
## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

and an ardour which only religion sown on a fertile ground can stir in the breast of man.

I learn now that priests are with nearly all the armies, and services are held as frequently as possible, and that during the action these men of God move among the troops, administering the last offices to those that are beyond earthly help, and binding up the wounds of those whose condition is not hopeless.

The spirit of the troops is perhaps typified by the scene that I have imperfectly tried to describe. Let no one who would understand the temperament and capacity of the Russian soldier forget, that in the very aspect seen here, there is one of the greatest assets that an army can have, when it is embodied in the heart of each of the simple units that forms its regiments, the men who pay the price of war and whose lives and shattered carcasses form the foundation of the highway of advancing Empire.





Service on the Battlefield : Priest showing the Cross to the Troops.





SCENES ON THE ROAD IN POLAND



## CHAPTER XIV

### SCENES ON THE ROAD IN POLAND

*Dated November 2, 1914,  
From RADUM, POLAND.*

WHAT I have seen to-day was not spectacular, but to one who has followed armies in the field, it was the most encouraging sight for a sympathizer of the Allies that he could possibly wish to behold. We have covered in and around here perhaps two hundred kilometres of road in our motor-cars, and never have I seen such signs of preparation for an aggressive movement. It is not an exaggeration to say that there are on the road to-day in our immediate vicinity, transport, munitions, and troops that if strung in a single line would extend for at least a hundred kilometres in length. All day long I have witnessed a continuous procession of everything that goes to make for war. Russia may have been a little slow in getting under way, but one feels here that she is not the less sure for all that.

One thing which impresses me greatly is the

## FIELD NOTES FROM

enormous amount of shrapnel caissons one sees compared to transport loaded with small-arm ammunition. Certainly there has never been a war where artillery played such an important rôle as in this ; and I think I do not exaggerate when I state that I have seen, in the last few days, fully a thousand six-horse teams with the ammunition caissons going to the front. And not only are they strung out for miles along the roads, but at frequent intervals one sees whole parks of them, covering acres of ground, with the little shaggy horses tethered in long rows to ropes. Every village is filled with hundreds of transport carts, while in and around and between one sees nothing but soldiers of every branch of the service. I do not know how many times to-day we have had to slow down our car to drive through the endless columns of men in leaden grey, who obligingly made a pathway through which we might move forward.

The Russian regiments on the march are the most informal organizations in the world. Ahead ride a few officers, and then in no particular formation come the troops : some on one side of the road and some on the other. Towards the rear they straggle off in dwindling streams, wandering about the fields, and plodding here and there as though they were all off on individual tours and each was on his own account.



Transport passing through a Polish Village.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

For miles after a regiment has passed one sees little groups trudging along, apparently perfectly detached and without any idea of their destination. Yet at night, to a man, they are all there for rations, and in the morning start off again in a solid formation.

I am told that this method of marching has proved a great puzzle to the aviators of the Germans trying to estimate the numbers of troops that are moving; for when the columns are so strung out, it is almost impossible from any height to tell whether what one sees is a battalion in close formation or a company strung out. Most armies march in solid masses, which can be seen on the roads for long distances and their strength judged to a nicety.

The more one sees of the individual of the Russian army the more one comes to like the common soldier here. They are the most good-natured, child-like, playful creatures in the world; and in the month I have been with the army, in constant association with troops, I have not seen a single fight among the soldiers or any disorder whatsoever. On the road and in their camps at night, all seem contented and happy when the weather is fine. It must be admitted that they look a little dismal in the rain.

For the first time on this trip we have seen considerable numbers of Cossacks, and have talked

## FIELD NOTES FROM

with a lot of them. Personally I am of the opinion that the terrible name given to the Cossacks is a libel. There may be undesirable individuals, but most of them that I have seen have been great overgrown children. Incidentally, I am gradually forming a similar impression of the Uhlans that I have seen. They may be quite different men on the other frontier, but those that have been taken prisoners here by the Russians are anything but terrifying to look at. Most of them that I have seen are very young, and look like schoolboys in uniform rather than the demons incarnate that I have read so much about since the war started.

We have travelled over some very bad roads, and the other day when we were stuck in a bad place where the bridges had been destroyed by the retreating Germans, and a detour had to be made, we were rescued by these very same prisoners, who came along just in the nick of time. During the delay in getting us out, I had a chat with both Germans and Austrians among the group of four or five hundred. I asked the Germans how they felt about the Russians, and how they had been treated. They agreed in the same breath that they liked them and that they had been treated very well. The Austrians said the same. The convoy accompanying this substantial block of captured men was not above a dozen Russian



A Cossack Patrol.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

soldiers. While some forty prisoners were trying to get our motor-cars out of the mud, one of the Russian soldiers came up with a few Austrians and asked each of our party in turn if we could not help a friend to change Austrian silver to Russian money. All fraternized together, and it is hard to believe that these men have the slightest personal animus against each other. As the war drags out, such bitterness as there is, is becoming less and less seen.

There were two very intelligent Germans in the crowd, and I talked for some time with them. Both were reservists: one was a merchant from Berlin, and the other, in time of peace, a carpenter. I asked them how the army talked about the war. "Oh, we shall win all right," the merchant said. "You know of course that France is already practically finished, and we have only Russia now, and we knew that would take some time." "How about England?" I asked. "You know of course that she has a new army of a million men that will go into the field before long." The two men turned and looked at each other. It was evident that neither of them knew anything about it at all, and their faces fell accordingly.

I talked with still a third, who confided to me that he was a coachman in time of peace, but that all things considered he infinitely preferred war to his last job.

## FIELD NOTES FROM

I am constantly inquiring among all for cases of atrocities, but I have not yet found one of which the evidence was clear or conclusive. One is constantly being told that Germans have committed this or that horrible deed, but upon examination I have never found a single individual who had seen it himself. He had always heard it from some one, who had got it from a soldier, who saw it at a distance, or who was told by some one else. Of the situation on the other side, or in Eastern Prussia, I would not presume to speak, for I have not been in those theatres of war ; but of what I have seen along the fronts in Galicia and Poland I do not believe that any excesses, excepting occasional isolated cases, are being practised on either side.

War at its very best is hideous enough, and certainly no good can come from taking the few isolated incidents, magnifying them and treating them as typical, and then giving them out to both sides. I do not think at present one could find many soldiers on this front on either side who have much to complain of at the hands of their enemy when captured. I believe the Germans here are conducting a very decent campaign, and I am certain that the Russians are doing the same.

One cannot overestimate the marvellous effect that the abolition of drink has had upon this army. It may be trite to write about it, but

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

the more one lives with these men the more one comes to wonder at the sobriety and absolute quiet and order of the army, both men and officers.

The organization of the transport service is excellent, and in all the miles of wagons I have seen in the past few days I have not seen one broken down, nor have I seen any congestion on the road. Everything is moving like clockwork, and any one who doubts that the Russian Army has been reorganized from the ground up, has only to spend a month or two studying it to realize his mistake.



# THE TAKING OF KIELCE





## CHAPTER XV

### THE TAKING OF KIELCE

KIELCE, POLAND,  
*November 3, 1914.*

THE Russians took Kielce to-day, and for once we were far enough forward to make it possible for us to enter the town with the troops. The action itself took place during the night, and, like all these fights, was a rear-guard affair, arranged by the Germans to delay the Russian advance long enough to permit of the easy retirement of their own transport and guns. The troops of the Czar, however, are in such spirits and so encouraged by constant advances, that they are moving much more rapidly than suits the convenience of the enemy ; with the result that by necessity some of these rearguard events assume the stubborn resistance of a pitched battle. Kielce was extremely intense for the day, or rather night, that it lasted ; and there is no doubt that the enemy is being hurried in his retreat much faster than suits his pleasure. The main bodies of the Russian advance are moving

## FIELD NOTES FROM

from twenty to twenty-five kilometres a day at present, while some of the flank regiments cover up to forty kilometres a day. The stands that are being made are smothered almost instantly with the volume of our troops that roll over the defence like the waves of the sea. The Kielce fight got under way a little late yesterday, but the Russians did not wait until daylight, but with ferocious eagerness attacked the Austrian centre at a village ten kilometres from here, and crumpled up the whole line, with the result that the retirement was made in a hurry. The last troops of the enemy left the town itself at ten in the morning, and we entered with the Russian soldiers a little past noon.

We were told at Radum, where we spent the night, that there would be a fight to-day at Kielce, and that we could go forward and see it. So we got an early start in our motor-cars and headed for the front, a distance of about fifty kilometres. The roads, however, were in a very bad state, thanks to the efforts of the retreating enemy, who had had sufficient leisure here to run ploughs through the beautiful macadam road, and burn or blow up all the bridges and culverts on the way. Every few miles it was necessary to make detours through fields and over hurriedly-thrown-together bridges. Again and again we stuck in the mud up to the axles; and now we began to realize the convenience of being attached to the General Staff and having



Occupation of Kielce by the Russians during the German Retreat in Poland.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

a Staff colonel as our leader. Every time we came to grief we had only to wait until the next company of troops or transport hove in sight, when they suspended the war against the enemy long enough to come down a hundred strong and pull us bodily out of our predicament. The result of the delays, however, was that what should have taken us a couple of hours took nearly five. The density of the traffic and transport made travel slow even where the roads were good.

As the morning advanced we began to pass the carts of wounded, and a hundred other unmistakable signs of the real front came in sight. A few miles from town we became wedged in the road with the whole vanguard of the army pouring in from the fields on each side ; and then we learned for the first time that the town had been taken and that the troops surging about us were those that had been fighting all night, and that, as a matter of fact, their first columns were just pressing in on the very heels of the enemy.

Ahead of us, the road was blocked with troops and Cossack cavalry, all swinging forward, singing songs and otherwise rejoicing at the advance after a brisk night's work. Just behind us there trotted in from the lanes, from the east and west, battery after battery of artillery, fresh with the mud and grime of their night's work in the positions. The soldiers were sitting on the limbers munching



## FIELD NOTES FROM

bread and shouting exuberantly at each other. These guns, we learned, had just been limbered up and were pushing forward to re-engage the enemy as soon as he could be overtaken. They had all been snatched out of their positions and hurried forward so rapidly that each piece and caisson was like a Christmas tree, with the odds and ends belonging to the soldiers that they had not had time to leave for the transport. Bales of hay hurriedly thrown on between gun and caisson, teapots and clothing, relics of the Austrian retreat, horses' nosebags, drinking-cups, and a thousand other intimate effects of the gunners jingled and rattled against the barrel of the gun itself, its muzzle now neatly capped with leather.

We entered the town surrounded by a forest of bayonets, with transport, cavalry, and ammunition wagons pouring through every street. A colonel of infantry on a big white horse, who was trying to get his own regimental transport forward through and out of the town, tried to stop our car; but when he saw the Staff shoulder-straps of our colonel, he grudgingly stopped his transport and let us slide through into the square of the town. The population were hanging out of the crowded windows and balconies. Russian flags were flying from almost every house. If I had any doubt before this day as to whether the feelings of Poland were for or against Russia,





**Russian Field Gun in Action (Poland).**



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

it would have been dissipated in this square. There was no doubt about the enthusiasm with which the Russian troops were received.

We drove our cars down to the hotel, now the headquarters of the general commanding the army corps. The Staff was already there, having luncheon, and as we entered they were all on their feet singing in their deep, hoarse voices the stirring Russian National Anthem. After a hasty bite, we went back to the square, and watched the avalanche of men that was pouring through the town.

They are impressive, these soldiers of the Czar, without a doubt. Here is no pomp and no brilliant show of uniform for officers and men. All is soberly practical; and as one stands for hours and watches them swinging through the streets in their dirty, grey coats, stained with the mud and dirt of battlefield and trench; with unshaven faces, and their teakettles and canteens jingling about them, the conviction grows that this army of Russia which is now pushing forward everywhere, is probably going to be the great deciding factor in this greatest of all wars. All the afternoon the columns were pouring through the square, with breaks every now and again; the soldiers splitting their ranks to let the six-horse teams drawing the long sleek guns, with their paint blistered off from the heat of rapid fire, pass through to the

## FIELD NOTES FROM

front. As the daylight began to fade, the columns of troops began to dwindle and give place to the endless stream of transport that seethed in its wake; and then, away to the south and west, came the sullen report of a gun, and then another and another and another, and presently the air was filled with the distant rumble of artillery fire.

We knew that the guns that had passed us on the road had already caught up with the enemy, and that his rearguard was again being pressed. But we unfortunately were now rounded up by our gentle but exceedingly firm colonel, and advised that we could not go any farther for the present, but must remain in the town. To ease our restlessness we were taken round after dinner to-night and presented to the general commanding the advance in this quarter. We spent half or three-quarters of an hour in his room at the hotel, the corridors of which were filled with aides and muddy orderlies coming and going.

One is much impressed with the seriousness with which these men are taking their job. The general in command had a small room, and a kit much less extensive than most of the war correspondents of our party maintain as necessities. A table strewn with military maps covered with pencil marks indicated the plans for the next day, and a fuming, unshaven division general, covered with mud, talking to an equally soiled Staff colonel



Russian Field Gun in Action (Poland).





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

in the corner of the room, indicated pretty clearly that we were not opportune in our visit. Yet the General commanding received us very courteously and kept us for nearly half an hour.

Before going to bed we took a stroll through the streets. Where at noon one could hardly pass for the congestion, there was now order and organization. The wave had rolled on, and already the front was twenty kilometres beyond us, and only the transport and occasional bodies of troops coming in from distant positions remained to tell of the deluge that had swept through this extremely picturesque little Polish city in the morning.

During our short stop here I have made every effort to secure all information possible from the villagers about the German and Austrian occupation of the place. We learn that they had been here for weeks, and that the retreat was a surprise to the Germans, but has not apparently had a very depressing effect on the soldiers, who maintain an absolute confidence in their ultimate victory. Huge supplies were accumulated here, and the inhabitants say that many of the enemy expected to winter in Kielce. German soldiers are apparently very gullible. I suppose it is against their military law to question even in their own minds what has been told them by their officers. In any case, they seem to believe here that the retreat from Warsaw was not a very serious matter

## FIELD NOTES FROM

and to have explained to the inhabitants that an early winter and cold weather had made it inconvenient, and that they were going home temporarily and would call later again in the spring.

From conversations with prisoners and with the people here, who seem to have had little trouble with the visitors, it is obvious that the rank and file of the Germans have been led to believe that the war in the West is practically all over but the shouting, and that it is merely a question of time when Russia will be disposed of. The belief is that they have done the hard job in France already, and now they will digest Russia at their leisure. The confidence of the Germans seems to have been shared by many of the inhabitants, who had gloomily come to share the same point of view. As one man said to me, "We had come to think the Germans were invincible. For weeks we have seen nothing but German and Austrian troops, artillery, and transport. There were so many of them, and all in such fine condition and so confident, that it did not seem possible they could be defeated. I had about given up hope, but now it is quite a different outlook," and he pointed out on the square filled with Russian bayonets moving in and swaying in unison through the street. Then he added significantly, "Is there no end of them? This early morning this whole square was blue with Austrian

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

uniforms. It seems like a dream to see nothing now but Russians." I asked him about the Germans. They, it seems, took their departure the afternoon before, leaving their allies of the Dual Monarchy to take up the burden of the rearguard.

From many conversations that I have had, it seems clear that the relations between the soldiers, and especially the officers, of the Germans and Austrians are not cordial, to put it mildly ; and there is a growing breach between them, which may yet prove to be of great significance before this war is over. The Germans are constantly forcing their allies into the bad places, and making them take up the thankless burden of rearguard duty, with the heavy losses in wounded and prisoners that follow, while the Germans themselves slip out with their transport. It is reported, and seems probable, that many German officers have been sprinkled through the Austrian regiments, and that these treat their Austrian fellow-officers with arrogance and contempt, which is creating dissatisfaction and intense annoyance. Quarrels and recrimination between them seem to be general, and if the reports that we hear are true, it is easily believable that the Austrians are getting sick of the job allotted them by their allies of pulling their chestnuts out of the fire.



## FIELD NOTES FROM

The spirit of the Austrian troops on this front is certainly at a very low ebb, and this accounts in part for the very large numbers of prisoners taken in every action now. We are told that they surrender in blocks, and that substantial bodies have come in with native guides to the Russian lines asking to be received. These stories are, however, given us by the Russians themselves, and I cannot vouch for their accuracy. All that I have written above must be taken merely as indicating a general trend of opinion, and accepted for what it is worth, and not as authoritative in any way. I believe, however, that the relations between Germany and Austria are worth watching ; and it is within the realm of possibility that Austria, sick of her assignment of holding back the Russians, which she is striving to do under great difficulty, heavy losses and no appreciation, may yet ask for terms of peace independently of her ally, an event which would certainly put the Germans in a desperate plight.

Among the hundreds and hundreds of Austrian prisoners and wounded that I have seen in the past few days, there have been but a handful of Germans. These hold themselves absolutely aloof from their Austrian fellow-captives, and their relations with them seem much more hostile than with the Russian guards that accompany them. Many of the captured Austrians are Poles from



Austrian Prisoners resting by the Road-side.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

Galicia, and they do not even pretend to have enthusiasm for, or interest in the war.

Russian sources here offer us tales of German atrocities, but on being investigated I find little ground for accepting any large portion of them. We were told, for instance, by a colonel, with great seriousness, that the Germans were wantonly butchering prisoners. Seventeen captured Cossacks, he told us, were lined up, and a German officer went down the line shooting them with his revolver one after the other. What was the evidence? A Cossack soldier said he had seen it all from a wood a mile away. No confirmation of this remarkable tale came from any other quarter; yet I noticed that the story was set down seriously by some of our party, and no doubt will go out as an authoritative statement.

I am constantly hearing similar tales. One was told me the other day of a drummer boy being captured and blown to bits by rifle bullets. What was the evidence? A man in the street had heard it from a soldier who was told by an eye-witness. And so on. It is of course difficult to follow these stories to their foundation, but personally I think the atrocity tales, unless absolutely proven, should be handled with great care. Rumours unverified and sent out as typical facts serve only to mislead the public, and inflame the soldiery to take reprisals for supposed excesses, which I honestly

## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

believe, in nine cases out of ten, are entirely made up. From the population one finds only minor complaints, such as quarrels over exchange between marks and roubles, underpayment for rooms, etc. That the population found the Germans arrogant and overbearing is undoubtedly true, but beyond that I believe their occupation has been as decent as is possible in war.



Russian Infantry passing through Kielce, following up the German Retreat from Warsaw.



## THE FIGHTING AROUND IVANGROD





## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FIGHTING AROUND IVANGROD

WARSAW,

*November 8, 1914.*

TWO weeks in Poland have given me an absolutely new impression of the armies of modern Russia. There is as much difference in organization, *moral*, and efficiency, between the armies which some of us saw in Manchuria ten years ago, and which crumpled up before the Imperial Guards of Japan at the battle of the Yalu, and the military machine that these past few weeks has been steadily and surely driving back the armies of Germany and Austria, as there was between the raw American recruits who stampeded at the battle of Bull Run in 1861 and the veterans that received the surrender of Lee at Appomatox four years later.

One who has lived with large armies in the field comes to look first of all at the great business side of the enterprise. In the public mind the soldier and the army is always judged from the spectacular point of view of the battlefield.

## FIELD NOTES FROM

But upon analysis one finds that the actual battle is merely the fruition of all that has been carefully prepared and nourished during years that have gone before. An army may be likened to an iceberg, of which it is said that seven-eighths is submerged. What we see of troops is but the merest fraction of all that has gone before to prepare for the great spectacle of the battle itself. The action is merely the sudden crystallization of all that has been in solution during the decades that have preceded. That nation which has not been preparing the solution has nothing to crystallize when the hour strikes; and when the moment for action comes, too often finds its military house built upon the sands, which dissipate beneath it at the first impact. The battle is the tempest itself, and when the storm comes and the winds blow, the structure of an army, and indeed of the nation itself, survives or crumbles according to whether or not the foundations of preparation are true or loose and disjointed.

So it is that one looks first at the vast seething life that is going on behind the firing line, for herein he may judge of what to expect on the battlefield itself.

Until I went to Poland I had not during this war been actually in the life of the army itself. Of the efficiency of the German army, measured

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

by the terrific blows that it had been striking, we all knew. Of the Russians, little was known save of their Galician campaign. But now at last, from the first day we entered the sphere of active and immediate operations, we had the chance of forming an opinion as to the quality of the soldiers of the Czar. This opinion, which in two days became a conviction, was that this army has been completely reorganized in ten years, and that it was now under full steam, with a momentum and efficiency almost incredible to those that had seen it ten years ago on the dismal plains of Manchuria.

For weeks there have been suggestions in the foreign press that Russia has been moving slowly; but that her slowness was the sign of sureness is the answer which one reads on the highways and byways of Poland to-day. I have seen the transport and the communications of a huge army in the Far East, but never have I seen or even dreamed of the sights that one sees daily on the lines of communications in Poland. One can take a motor-car and drive for hours along the beautiful macadam roads for a hundred kilometres, pass the almost unbroken line of transport, ammunition and artillery, intermingled with infantry and cavalry that is moving to the front. The ways are filled for mile after mile with the unbroken lines of all that

## FIELD NOTES FROM

goes to make for the execution of war. In many places they advance two abreast, and of the wagons containing the miscellany from which an army sucks its life, the numbers easily run into tens of thousands. And between, and around and about all, are ever the seething throngs of the soldiers themselves—these quiet, good-natured grey-coated units of the Czar, with their bayonets invariably fixed, moving forward in brigades, regiments, battalions, and companies. The picture of the road that always lingers in one's mind at night is this forest of bayonets as background for miles and miles of labouring caissons and creaking transport carts. From the first day that one is on the road, one feels absolutely certain that Russia has two of the great requisites of war—the organization and the men themselves. Organization, as I use it, means supplies and the efficient means of transporting them in a regular and orderly manner. Napoleon said that an army was composed of the material factors and of the moral components, and of these the latter was three times as important as the former. With every possible necessity, and with the last word in equipment, an army without *moral* is as a motor-car destitute of petrol.

There is no question about the Russians to-day. Two months ago, when I first came to Russia, I





Transport in Marsh Land.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

wrote a story from Petrograd in which I mentioned the new spirit of Russia and the willingness with which the troops were going to the war. After having been at the front and seen hundreds and thousands of the same soldiers on the roads, in the trenches, and in the hospitals, I am convinced that I did not exaggerate the spirit of new Russia. None of these pathetic units in the great game wanted the war, of course, and I suppose every one of them longs for its conclusion; but almost without exception they take it philosophically. Their hardships and their losses, their privations and their wounds—all are accepted as a matter of course. The absolute hopelessness which one saw on their faces in Manchuria is not seen in these days. The keynote of their appearance, wherever I have seen them in this war, is a good-natured willingness to accept what is necessary for the general cause the nature of which most of them understand.

The Russian soldier is to me the most philosophical individual in the world. I have seen him in the hospitals with arms and legs gone, head smashed in, ghastly wounds of all sorts, and if he has the strength to speak at all, he whispers "Nichivo," the equivalent of which in English is "What difference does it make, anyway?" After a glimpse of the men and the munitions that permeate the life behind the army, one is

## FIELD NOTES FROM

not surprised at the feats that these same men, backed by their organization and transport, are performing everyday on the actual field of battle. While it is true that many of the recent actions have been rearguard affairs, where it has been perfectly obvious that the enemy was making a stand only long enough to permit him to get out his impedimenta at his leisure, it is equally true that there have been other actions where he had not the slightest idea in the world of leaving unless he was forced.

The best illustration of this is the battle which seems to be known in a vague way as the battle of Ivangrod. I have asked many people in the last few days what they knew of this action. All seemed to be aware in a general way that it was an important Russian victory. Some said it was a German-Austrian rearguard action; but few seemed to know any of the details of the contest which, in any other war that this world has ever seen, would have filled books with its details of fierce hand-to-hand fighting. As far as I know there is nothing in the history of war, with the possible exception of the American battle of the Wilderness, that can touch this event I speak of; and the Virginia campaign, as regards losses, duration, and men engaged, was a mere skirmish compared with this. Yet here a few weeks afterwards, beyond the mere fact of it



Russian Advance Guard occupies Kielce.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

having taken place and having been won by the Russians, practically nothing is known about it.

I shall not attempt to describe the military or strategic aspects of this desperate spot, because if one begins on the historical relation of battles in this war there is absolutely no ending. I shall, however, sketch just a little of it, to indicate the nature of the work that the Russian soldiers did here. For in no battle of the whole war, on any front, has the fibre, determination and courage of troops been put more severely to the test than in this one.

The German programme, as has been pointed out, contemplated taking both Warsaw and Ivan-grod and the holding for the winter of the line formed by the Vistula between the two. The Russians took the offensive from Ivangrod, crossed the river, and, after hideous fighting, fairly drove Austrians and Germans from positions of great strength around the quaint little Polish town of Kozienice. From this place, for perhaps ten miles west, and I know not how far north and south, there is a belt of forest of fir and spruce. I say forest, but perhaps jungle is a better term for it, for it is so dense with trees and underbrush that one can hardly see fifty feet away. Near Kozienice the Russian infantry, attacking in flank and front, fairly wrested the enemy's position and drove him back into this jungle. The front



## FIELD NOTES FROM

was itself bristling with guns, and I counted in about a mile position, forty-two guns. The taking of this line was in itself a test of the mettle of the Russian peasant soldier.

But this was only the beginning. Once in the wood, the Russian artillery was limited in its effect upon the enemy; and in any event, the few roads through the forest and the absence of open places made its use almost impossible. The enemy retired a little way into this wilderness and fortified. The Russians simply sent their troops in after them. The fight was now over a front of perhaps twenty kilometres. There was no strategy.

It was all very simple. In this belt were Germans and Austrians. They were to be driven out, if it took a month. The carnage began.

Day after day the Russians poured troops in on their side of the wood. These entered, were seen for a few minutes, then disappeared in the labyrinth of trees and were lost. Companies, regiments, battalions, and even brigades, were absolutely cut off from each other. None knew what was going on anywhere but a few feet in front. All knew that the only thing required of them was to keep advancing. This they did, foot by foot and day after day; fighting each other hand to hand; taking, losing and retaking position after position. In all of this ten kilometres of forest

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

I dare venture to say there is hardly an acre without its trenches, rifle pits and graves.

Here one sees where a dozen men had a little fort of their own and fought furiously with the enemy a few feet away in a similar position. Day after day it went on, and day after day troops were poured into the Russian side of the wood; and day and night the continuous crack of rifle fire and the roar of artillery hurling shells into the wood, could be heard for miles. But the artillery played a lesser rôle, for the denseness of the forest made it impossible to get an effective range. Yet they kept at it, and the forest for miles looks as though a hurricane had swept through. Trees staggering from their shattered trunks, and limbs hanging everywhere, show where the shrapnel shells have been bursting. Yard by yard the ranks and lines of the enemy were driven back, but the nearer their retreat brought them to the open country west of the wood, the hotter the contest became; for each man in his own mind must have known how they would fare when, once driven from the protecting forest, they attempted to retreat through the open country without shelter.

The state of the last two kilometres of the woody belt is hard to describe. There seems scarcely an acre that is not sown like the scene of a paperchase, only the trail here is bloody

## FIELD NOTES FROM

bandages and bits of uniform. Here also there was small use for the artillery, and the rifle and the bayonet played the leading rôle. Men, fighting hand to hand with clubbed muskets and bayonets, fought from tree to tree and ditch to ditch. Systematically, patiently, stoically, the Russians sent in fresh troops at their side of the wood.

The end was of course inevitable. The troops of the Dual Alliance could not, I suppose, fill their losses, and the Russians could. Their army was under way, and they would have taken that belt of wood if the entire peasant population of Russia had been necessary to feed the maw of that ghastly monster of carnage in the forest. But at last the day came when the dirty, grimy, bloody soldiers of the Czar pushed their antagonists out of the far side of the belt of woodland. What a scene there must have been in this lovely bit of open country, with the quaint little village of Augustow at the cross-roads!

Once out in the open, the hungry guns of the Russians, that had for so long yapped ineffectively and sightlessly into blind forest, got their chance. Down every road through the wood, came the six-horse teams with the guns jumping and jingling behind, with their accompanying caissons heavy with shrapnel. The moment the enemy were in the clear, these batteries,

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

eight guns to a unit, were unlimbered on the fringe of the wood and were pouring out their death and destruction on the wretched enemy now retreating hastily across the open.

The place where the Russians first turned loose on the retreat is a place to remember—or to forget, if one can. Dead horses, bits of men, blue uniforms, shattered transport, overturned gun carriages, bones, broken skulls, and grisly bits of humanity strew every acre of the ground. A Russian officer, who seemed to be in authority on this gruesome spot, volunteered the information that already they had buried at Kozienice in the wood and in the open 16,000 dead; and as far as I could make out the job was still a long way from being completed. Those who had fallen in the open, and along the road, had been decently interred, as the forests of crosses for ten miles along that bloody way clearly indicated; but back in the woods themselves, there were hundreds and hundreds of bodies lying as they had fallen. Sixteen thousand dead means at least 70,000 casualties all told, or 35,000 on a side if losses were equally distributed. This is figured on the basis of the 16,000 dead which were already buried, without allowing for the numbers of the fallen that still lie about in the woods. And yet this is a battle the name of which is, I dare venture to say, hardly more than



## FIELD NOTES FROM

known either in England or the United States, and in which the losses on both sides probably amount to more than the entire army that Meade commanded at the battle of Gettysburg. If one wants to get an idea of what war is under these conditions, it is only necessary to stroll back among the trees and wander about among the maze of rifle pits and trenches thrown up by the desperate soldiers as they fought their way forward or defended their retreat.

The battle is over now, and it is a day of clear sunshine in the late autumn—such a day as the Indian summers in New England bring, when the life of spring seems to be coming back. All is peace and harmony, beetles and caterpillars are crawling about and insects humming in the sunshine. At every step we stumble across the ghastly corpses of the dead, lying with glazed eyes staring into the blue, cloudless heavens above them. All is now serene and quiet, and save for the gentle murmur of the wind in the tree tops, there is not a sound to break the stillness. And in each ghastly remnant of a human being that one sees, there is the pathetic story of some human life. Here alone, unwashed and uncared for, lie the last earthly remains of men, each of whom has somewhere a wife or sweetheart, mother or sister, who would perhaps give their life to have even the poor mangled body that





Ammunition Wagon left by the Austrians after the Battle of Avgoustow.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

lies rotting in the woods. And in each dead body is disclosed the story of the fight, and the pathetic effort of the stricken man to stave off the inevitable.

And he who has the heart to walk about in this ghastly place can read the last sad moments of almost every corpse. Here one sees a blue-coated Austrian with leg shattered by a jagged bit of a shell. The trouser perhaps has been ripped open and clumsy attempts been made to dress the wound, while a great splash of red shows where the failing strength was exhausted before the flow of blood could be checked. Here, again, is a body with a ghastly rip in the chest made by bayonet or shell fragment. Frantic hands now stiffened in death are seen trying to hold together great wounds from which life must have flowed in a few great spurts of blood. Here it is no figure of speech about the ground being soaked with gore. One can see it—coagulated like bits of raw liver; sand and earth in great lumps are held together by this human cement.

Other bodies lie in absolute peace and serenity, struck dead with a rifle bullet through the heart or some other instantly vital spot. These lie like men asleep, and on their faces is the peace of absolute rest and relaxation; but they are few compared to those upon whose pallid, blood-

## FIELD NOTES FROM

stained faces one reads the last frantic agony of death. And what I have written here of the dead is only a little of what one could write, for of the more horrible sights of the battlefield it is impossible to write, and indeed very unpleasant to think of at all if one can keep them out of one's mind after having seen them.

I have mentioned this battle of Ivangrod merely as a type to illustrate the manner of work that the Russians are doing in these days, and to make clear the determination with which they are waging this war. In the terrible chaos which now involves all Europe it is doubtful if the world at large (other than the countries engaged) will ever realize the magnitude and severity of these operations. Even as I write now of the scene of carnage and blood in the woods about Kozienice, there is in the making, about Cracow, a battle of so much greater importance and on so much vaster a scale, that perhaps when these lines are read, the action I have spoken of will be utterly lost in its comparative insignificance. Personally I have long since abandoned any idea of trying to work out the details of the battles that are going on. A single one of these covers such an area and contains so many details, that even to begin a study of a field demands a vast amount of time. Before one action is fairly ended, a far greater one is already under way; and all that a correspondent



A Russian Grave near Avgoustow.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

can hope to do in this war is to keep pace with the results from day to day, sending as carefully as may be the significant events of what is going on, and not attempting to work out the details at all. Such a story as this must be taken merely as a typical cross-section of a battle, and in no way an attempt at an accurate historical study of the military movement itself.

The soldiers themselves go on from battlefield to battlefield, from one scene of carnage to another. They see their regiments dwindle to nothing, their officers decimated, three-fourths of their comrades dead or wounded, and yet each night they gather about their bivouacs apparently undisturbed by it all. One sees them on the road the day after one of these desperate fights, marching cheerfully along, singing songs and laughing and joking with each other. This is *moral*, and it is of the stuff that victories are made. And of such is the fibre of the Russian soldier scattered over these hundreds of miles of front to-day. He exists in millions much as I have described him above. He has abiding faith in his companions, in his officers, and in his cause. I think myself that he and his brothers are going to be extremely hard for the Germans to beat, and that sooner or later he will win. Time alone can justify this belief.



## THE ROMANCE OF WAR





## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ROMANCE OF WAR

PETROGRAD,

*November 21, 1914.*

**I**N the early days of August Germany declared war against Russia. The Kaiser, dressed in a resplendent uniform, made an address from the balcony of his Imperial Palace in Berlin. Frantic crowds, wild with the hysteria of the moment, cheered madly for war. Men threw their hats in the air and embraced each other joyously just as though some great blessing had befallen their nation. Berlin seethed with enthusiasm, and wherever the great War Lord, in his motor-car with his gilded chauffeur, appeared, he was cheered to the echo. The local papers announced the triumphal departure of the city garrison for the front. There seemed then nothing to mar the picture of a short and glorious campaign that in every German mind was to raise the Fatherland to a pinnacle of power never before even dreamed of.

## FIELD NOTES FROM

In Paris almost similar scenes were enacted. The French gave way to unrestrained exultation. The war of redemption was at hand, the day of vengeance for which France had waited for a generation had dawned. The grim and sinister guns that left Paris for the front were smothered in wreaths and garlands of roses, which all but concealed the ugly muzzles which were formed but for the utterance of messages of death. The departing infantry left Paris with the echoes of cheers still ringing in their ears. Thus did France take up her burden.

In Petrograd the people took it more quietly, but none the less deeply. Three hundred thousand Russians gathered in the square before the Winter Palace, and upon their knees chanted the National Anthem of their race. The Nevsky Prospekt shook with the tramp of marching feet and the rumble of the batteries going to the battlefield. Men, women and children fought for places near the soldiery in its march to the station. Brass bands blared out the glory of Russia. Waving standards, borne by proudly marching colour-sergeants, were greeted with roars of enthusiastic cheering.

In Vienna the aged Emperor of the Dual Monarchy was crowned with the expression of popular approval. In Serbia, Japan, and even phlegmatic England, the coming of war found analogous

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

signs of eagerness and approbation. From every capital affected by the declarations of hostilities came photographs of crowds "cheering for war." The various monarchs who were directly or indirectly responsible for it were all national heroes on the instant. Everywhere we saw and heard the same story. Bands, eager crowds, troops idolized, waving standards, fervent speeches and denunciations. It was the one brief period in which all Europe worshipped for an instant at the shrine of carnage, an altar disguised in bunting and garlands before which, with eyes blinded to the future miseries, the races of the world forgot the price and became dizzy with joy. The romance of war was in the heart of every man. There is another side of the picture. Let us look at it.

### I

There is a beautiful city in Galicia called Lemberg. Among its imposing public buildings there is none finer than the gigantic railway station, whose classic lines and symmetrical proportions speak of the masterhand and of an architect who builded a monument to the glory of his imperial and royal master, whose name—Franz Joseph—is emblazoned in gilded letters above the impressive entrance. Every traveller in Galicia will recall the luxurious equipment of this modern

## FIELD NOTES FROM

and magnificently appointed edifice. Let us take a glance at it as I saw it a few weeks ago.

From each of the dozen platforms a marble stairway leads down to a transverse tunnel by which one enters into the dépôt itself. The system is identical with that of the New York Central station at Albany, New York. In the flickering arc lights of the train-shed—it was late at night that I passed through—there were rows upon rows of hospital cars and freight cars, on each of which a huge red cross had been hurriedly painted. With the exception of one long train, loaded with canvas-covered guns, there was nothing else visible in the shed. The air above was cool and fresh in the late autumn night. To breathe it was exhilaration. One paused for a moment at the head of the stairway from which came the flow of dead air such as one notices at the mouth of a mine. In the transverse tunnel, the lifelessness of it was more apparent, but it was forgotten in the tramping feet of men bearing stretchers from another track beyond.

We stood back a moment or two to allow a series of sad objects to pass, and then, taking advantage of a break in the procession, we slipped into the great dépôt between a stretcher and two men who carried between them a blue-coated object with head on breast and arms swaying helplessly. Once inside





Villagers in Poland searching amongst the Ruins of their Homes.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

the station one caught one's breath. The air, laden with anæsthetics, disinfectants, and the subtle smell of dried blood and unwashed humanity, seemed incapable of nourishing the blood within one's lungs. But the sights within drove all else from one's consciousness. The great hall within was set so thick with stretchers, that it was only possible to pass through it by picking one's way gingerly and stepping over silent forms. And such objects as these ghastly litters contained! At this time the fighting was going forward on the San and round Przemyśl, and the wounded had come directly from the firing line and trenches with only the first field dressings.

Every form of horror that human ingenuity had designed for shell and shrapnel to create was here as an evidence of the inventors' success. Here a man with trousers ripped from his waist down, and swathed in deep-dyed bandages from hip to knee, showed where a fragment of a shell had done its work. Near by lay a huge creature whose purple bandages failed to conceal a great raw hole where a face had been. Others, with glazing eyes, looked dully through and beyond us, while the slow and laboured breath told the story of life ebbing slowly away from a wound in some vital organ. Across the hall, in the blaze of a dozen arcs, hurriedly strung to enable

## FIELD NOTES FROM

the surgeon to do his task, is the great first-class dining-room. On each of three operating tables lies a huge giant half stripped, under the knife of the skilful surgeon, who, with haggard face but steady hand, moves rapidly but surely about his work, actually stepping over stretchers that wait their turn. Huge baskets are rapidly filling with bushels of blood-stained bandages; here and there a hand neatly cut off, or the stump of a severed leg, among the Red Cross wrappings tells of the surgeon's kind of work.

We linger only a moment in the flicker of the white arc lamps, and push on through the hallway into the great waiting-room. The ticket windows are now closed. The benches have been removed to make room. There is standing room only, and hardly that. Every available inch not covered by a stretcher, is occupied by a soldier, whose wounded hand, arm, or bandaged head is sufficiently slight enough to keep him on his feet, but still bad enough to make a re-dressing necessary as early as the rush upon the surgeon's time will make possible. I have said there were three doctors in one dining-room. There are two other dining-rooms, and in each is a similar scene. Perhaps the reader may conclude that this dreadful scene spells poor organization. Quite the contrary.

The Russians are achieving wonders. In Lem-

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

berg during the war there have been to date, including Austrians (who form perhaps the major part), more than a hundred thousand wounded. The night I speak of there had come in a single block, three thousand wounded, including those of both sides. What we see is merely the first shock of the avalanche from the battlefield. Return at daylight (I have been in the ghastly edifice at almost all hours of the day and night) and there is not a soldier or a wounded man left. Sleepy attendants are cleaning up, and tired surgeons and nurses have either gone or are just packing up after their night's work. The wounded that we saw a little earlier are already in clean beds. What human love and sympathy and care can do is now being done. It is sad. It is terrible. But it is war. "Where," one asks oneself, "is the romance of it all? Are these the same men who a month ago departed from Vienna and Petrograd with music and amidst cheers?" No cheers now. Eyes that shone with the glitter of excitement and the approbation of fellow-citizens who speeded them to battle are now dull with pain or sad with apprehension of the future. Yet the sacrifice is one of necessity. The Russians accept it. They believe in their cause. It is part of the day's work. The *omelette* that Napoleon talked of is being made. They are

## FIELD NOTES FROM

the eggs. What does it matter! The balance of power in Europe cries for adjustment!

## II

Let us have another look at war and what it spells.

We are in Poland now. It has been a beautiful autumn day, and the sun has set over the horizon to the west in a great red glory. It is a lovely country dotted with villages, with great, white, macadam roads lined with avenues of trees stretching in long, white tangents from village to village. Surely twilight, of all hours of the day, is the supreme moment of peace on earth and goodwill to men. With all nature serene and the afterglow of departing day steeping all in quiet and tranquillity, it is impossible to realize that the lust of killing can be in any human heart. In the fading light we halt in the street of what this morning was a prosperous little village. Let us pause by the roadside and have a look at what is about us. Through the main street in the gloaming, their figures already dimly silhouetted against the western sky, there passes an interminable procession of the neutral-tinted uniforms of Russian soldiers. Their bayonets twinkle feebly in the dim light, and their tired faces are almost undistinguishable.





Russian Soldiers Entrenching (Poland).



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

Ever and anon their ranks scatter to right and left, to permit the passage of the wagons bearing wounded, who are moving and jolting to the rear; some moaning softly, others silent and stern, with passionless eyes gazing straight into the sky as they lie upon their backs in the crude conveyances.

There has been a battle here to-day. It was one of the many rearguard actions of the Germans in their hurried flight from Warsaw. The Russians, moving forward with an impetuosity that would not be denied, were pushing close on to their transport and their ammunition train. For a day, a few devoted regiments of the retreating hosts had been thrown into the breach, to stem the tide long enough to permit the enemy to get away with his impedimenta. Unfortunately for this wretched little village, the Germans made a stand here on their retreat. What was the answer? A few quickly spoken words from an officer on the eastern hills a few kilometres away. Eight guns are snapped off their limbers, ranges are called sharply, and in ten minutes the village which shelters the retreating troops is a heap of ruins, and the enemy are once more stringing out to the west down the road, followed by the shrapnel until they have passed over the hills and are out of range.

## FIELD NOTES FROM

The troops we see passing forward in the twilight are reserves pushing forward to keep up with the Russian advance, which hours ago raced through here on the very heels of the retiring enemy. Over in the woods a few hundred yards away, are the still warm bodies of the Germans, who, true to discipline and the commands of their officers, patiently awaited under a deadly fire for the bayonets of the Russians. To-morrow the scrupulous Russian will bury the bodies and erect a cross above the grave with a respectful inscription, and the incident in the wood will have been closed. There are only a few hundred dead. What does that amount to in a war where there are millions engaged!

We forget ourselves as we turn back to the village. The simple people, who have spent their lives here until yesterday, are returning now. They are wandering about aimlessly, dazed by the transformation effected in a few hours.

Here is a cottage the walls of which are still standing. Even the doorway is intact though the door itself hangs drunkenly on a single hinge. The family horse, torn open by a shrapnel shell, lies with his head stretched across the sill. In the back yard half a dozen cows are gazing reflectively at a heap of ashes where their shed once stood. In wonderment they chew their cud and expectantly await the coming of some one to empty

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

their full udders. No one, I think, will come. The mother sits on an overturned tub in the yard, a baby at her breast and two little children clinging to her skirts. She is sobbing quietly. Where is her husband? Perhaps he lingered too long, or took refuge in the shell-swept wood. He too is but an incident in the catastrophe, a drop in the bucket of misery.

The next cottage presents more signs of hope. Nothing stands but the chimney, but here at least we see signs of life. A fire has been kindled on the hearthstone, and in its red flicker the vigorous figure of a woman is moving about preparing some kind of meal for three little children who sit on the doorstep without. A man with a rake is pulling over the ashes. Here is a family that will soon re-establish itself. Reliance and hope speak everywhere. For them we need not worry.

Across the street is a heap of ashes. Not even a chimney remains. Under a tree a man is standing. He is holding a crying child in his arms. His eyes look at us dully and without expression. It is growing dark now, and the details are fading slowly from our sight. The day is now over, and we drive back thirty kilometres to our headquarters. Already we hear of a greater conflict elsewhere, and turn in for the night and go to sleep as quickly as we can, for in the morn-



## FIELD NOTES FROM

ing we are to motor 140 kilometres to another front.

But what we have seen is nothing wanton. It is simply war. The Germans made a stand. The Russians drove them out. Everything was legitimate. The village was in the way; there was no other resource. Thousands of other villages in every theatre of war can tell the same story.

I wonder if the cheering crowds in Unter den Linden in Berlin, the eager throngs that marched through the Graben in Vienna, thought of this when they howled aloud for war, and became drunk with the romance of it?

### III

One more glimpse and I have finished.

There was a battle only a week or so ago at Kielce. Probably the reader never even heard of such a place, and perhaps the battle was so small in the huge perspective of what is now the order of the day in Europe, that its echo never reached England or America at all. Still in any other war it would have been worth writing about.

The front was twenty kilometres across, and on both sides perhaps nearly 100,000 men were engaged. It was a rearguard action, and lasted but a few hours. The Austrians, as usual in this retreat towards the south-west, were

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

left to hold the rear. Their centre was in a village ten kilometres east of Kielce. It was an ideal position to hold, with a walled churchyard as its apex, with rifle pits, gun positions and trenches protecting its flanks. Here, no doubt, the enemy felt sure of holding the Russians for several days.

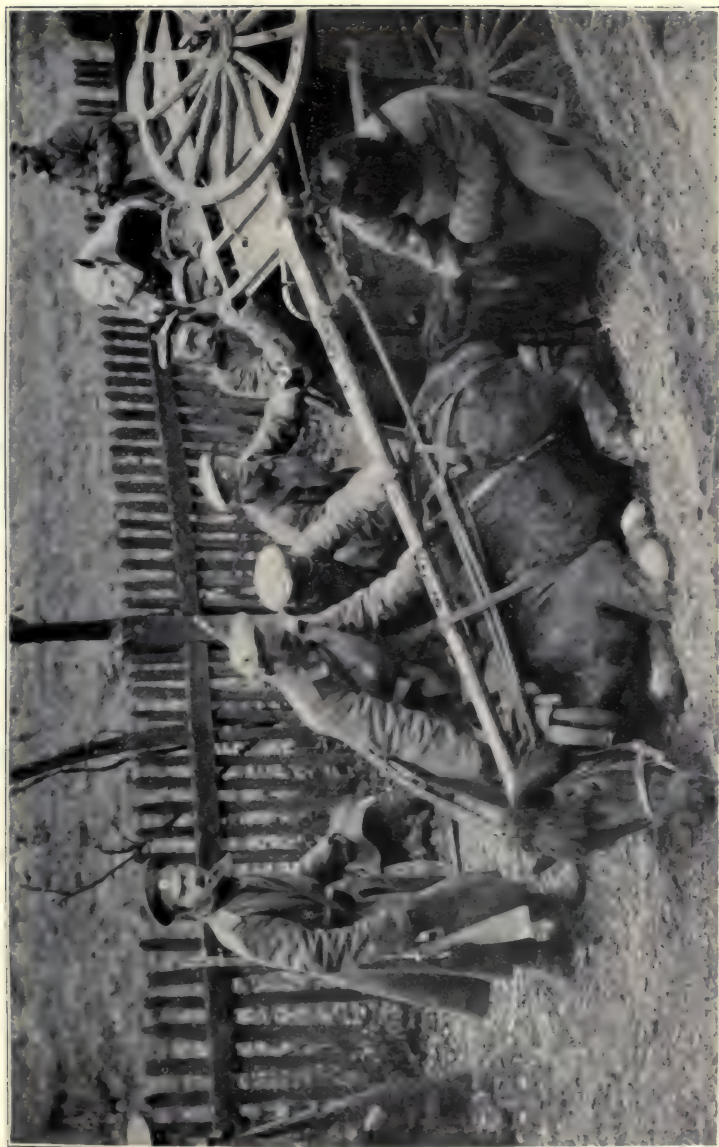
But even we who have been with the army for a month, and are in sympathy with it, have been surprised by the momentum, inspired by *moral* and engendered of organization fulfilled, that it has attained. The advance of the Czar's soldiers, filled with confidence from battles won at Ivangrod, Augustow and Radom, never waited here for conventional operations, but the first wave of the advance took this central point in a night attack with the bayonet. They even swept over the loopholed wall of the churchyard, like the waves of the sea over the castles of sand that a child has erected on the beach, before the incoming tide. With the centre carried by storm, and the flanks already enveloped, the whole line crumpled up; and once more the flood of Russians poured on the wake of the retreating enemy like impounded water in a reservoir when the dam gives way.

The Russians were proud of this churchyard enterprise, as well they might be. So we journeyed over to this pivotal point to have a look at it.

## FIELD NOTES FROM

It was a quaint little village that clustered about cross-roads. In the very centre was the church and its walled yard, which hemmed in an ancient graveyard whose mouldering tombstones showed their age. The only sound here to break the stillness of the morning was the rumble and clatter of ammunition caissons, each with six horses to the team, that in an endless line were moving to the south-east where the distant rumble of artillery told that our advance was again pressing the retreating columns of the Dual Alliance. The whole churchyard was littered with the equipment of fallen soldiers. Guns, haversacks, bloody bandages and coagulated blood were scattered promiscuously among the graves. The villagers, under the directions of the Russians, were already mobilizing the dead. Creaking carts of the peasantry had been pressed into the service, and were plodding about the fields in all directions, picking up the dead and bringing them into the town, where they were accumulating in rows, grey-coated Russian beside blue-clad Austrian. The children ran excitedly about the street inspecting each hideous corpse, and screaming with excited curiosity at every fresh horror.

On the outskirts of the village huge trenches were being digged, beside which the dead were ranged in crowds. Phlegmatic peasants drove up with wagonloads of stiffened corpses, bloody



A Siberian Pony in Difficulties.







## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

faces leering gruesomely with unseeing eyes from the back of the carts, with here and there an arm or a leg sticking rigidly out of the mass. Like bits of pig-iron they are dumped out on the grass. Here a Russian with face half gone, grimaces horribly with one glassy eye at a beautiful Austrian boy whose pallid face looks tranquilly into his; the hand, clutched in the rigour of death at the left breast, shows that he fell without a struggle, while the half-smile on his youthful mouth bespeaks the fact that he at least never knew what hit him.

A little beyond at a wayside cross is another heap of dead. One looks at them and shudders at the horrors that shell fragments can make out of what once was a man. But as we look there come those whose duty it is to bury them. Good men, these peasants, no doubt, but surely not sensitive. As they begin to disentangle the bodies and pull them toward the grave by one leg, with passionless face bobbing in the dirt behind, one turns sadly away. This, too, is but an incident.

Did the girls of Vienna, when they cheered this headless corpse, then a strong youth in the flush of early manhood, foresee this finish? Did the dainty hands that placed the wreaths upon the muzzles of the guns that lumbered to the front, realize the character of the work that those

## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

metal mouths were designed to fulfil? What do the cheers, the bands, the waving standards mean now? Where is the romance?

Sherman spoke well when he said at Atlanta, "The essence of war is cruelty." What we see daily is decent warfare. Is it cruel? Perhaps, but it is war, and without it there could be no victories gained nor empire built. It puzzles the imagination and distorts the perspective, but it must be accepted—and forgotten, if possible.

WARSAW DURING THE SECOND  
GERMAN ADVANCE



CHAPTER XVIII

WARSAW DURING THE SECOND  
GERMAN ADVANCE

WARSAW, POLAND,  
*December 15, 1914.*

WHEN the Germans left this region in October and we had accompanied them in their retirement as far west as Skierniewice and as far south as Kielce, there were many of us who were so ignorant of the German determination to keep everlastingly at the game over here as to believe that they had abandoned Poland for good. True, as I have already stated, I was in Kielce on November 3, the very day that the enemy retired before our advance, a number of the inhabitants entertained me with the remarks of the German soldiers to the effect that the Germans were only leaving to suit their own convenience and would be back when the cold weather with frozen roads and rivers would make campaigning easier for them. But I put this down at the time as stories told by the German officers to their men to keep them from being discouraged.

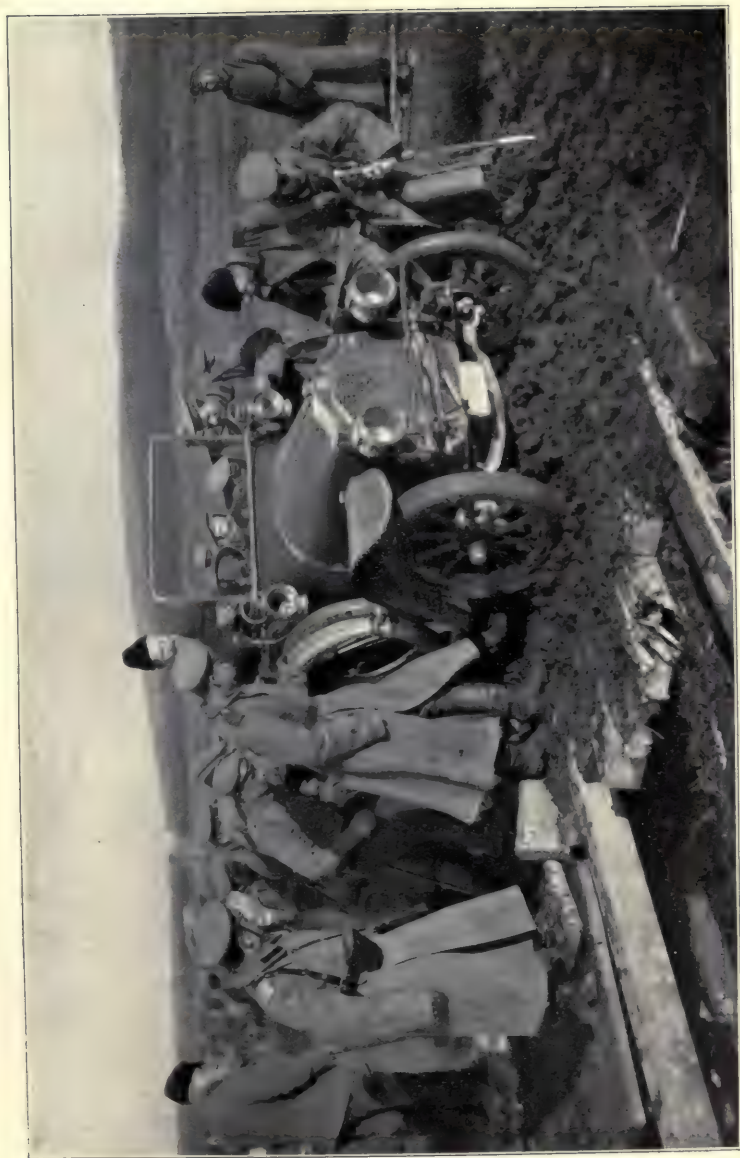


## FIELD NOTES FROM

In the light of what followed, and the much greater scale of the second invasion, we can only conclude that what we took to be heavy fighting in October was in comparison but a mere reconnaissance. Even when the second movement started, many in Russia felt that it was only a demonstration to relieve the pressure on Cracow and the ever impending menace of the Silesian invasion ; but after Lodz was abandoned and we heard reports of many army corps pouring in on this front from Germany, we began to realize that the Polish theatre was at last to be the big news centre for some months to come. The likelihood of this was increased by the fact that the fighting in the West had settled down to trench warfare, and had come to an approximate deadlock, calculated to last at least till the spring.

One by one the correspondents who had been marking time in Petrograd, began to slip quietly away, and by the middle of December the lobby of the Bristol Hotel here had become the rendezvous of all the lost journalists in Russia. Percival Gibbon, the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, has likened Warsaw in 1914 to Brussels in 1815, and his comparison is not inapt.

Here in a first-class hotel, which is as fine as any in Europe, one finds the great news centre



Correspondents' Car in Difficulties: Russian Soldiers to the Rescue.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

of this whole war. I am told that when the war started, the proprietors of this establishment thought of closing it up for fear of lack of trade; but as a matter of fact, from the day of the first German advance it has been difficult to get a room here at all, so full is the town of officers and those whose business is ever upon the threshold of war. In the great luxurious lobby that six months ago was given over almost entirely to groups of tourists and pleasure seekers, one sees now hardly a civilian all day long. All day long the hotel is filled with a moving throng of officers representing every branch of the Russian service. Since the fighting has settled down to prolonged operations west of us, hundreds of the wives and women relatives of the officers have come down here, and one can go a long way and find no gayer scene of brightness and life than the lobby and corridors of the hotel. It is hard to realize that the front where hundreds of thousands of men are facing each other in desperate fighting is only thirty miles away.

But to understand that war is a reality, one has only to step out into the street. For there, from morning until night, is the constant evidence that Warsaw is the base, and also the great artery through which flows the transport of the enormous army that is just to the west of us. All day and

## FIELD NOTES FROM

all night the interminable line of transport carts drags past the hotel on its way to the front. Batteries, hundreds upon hundreds of caissons, bearing shrapnel and ammunition, move slowly through the streets. A dozen times a day one meets battalions and regiments of new units of troops plodding steadily through the town, the great patient soldiers trudging along through the snow towards the trenches where they, too, are going to take up their place in Russia's greatest war.

In spite of the fact that the front is so near, it is very difficult to gather direct information of what is going on from day to day. I have never, in a somewhat varied experience, found any place where more false reports and misinformation circulated at par than here in Warsaw. Even Chefoo in the Manchurian campaign, which up to that time had the record for inaccuracies, must take second place to Warsaw. Hardly a day passes in which one is not told with the greatest conviction by one and another stories to the effect that the Germans have broken our line, are already at Blonie (eighteen miles away), that Warsaw will be evacuated instantly, and I know not what other wild tales. There is little doubt that the enormous population of Jews here is for the most part German in its sympathies, and that probably these falsehoods started from Hebrew sources.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

But even the best informed and the most serious minded are more than half the time misled as to what is actually going on. Though the news from almost every front is actually in this hotel within twenty-four hours of its occurrence, it is all but impossible to get it pieced together so as to make a consistent whole. The younger officers who will talk, know nothing about the situation save in the immediate vicinity in which they have themselves been engaged. The front is so extended, and there are so many thousand details, that the report of a single individual who has come from the front line is about as informing as to the whole perspective as the view-point of a man whose nose is two feet from a stone wall. I find that even some of the officers are not informed as to which corps flank their own organizations, while the lower generals have only the vaguest ideas as to operations that are going on ten miles away. The man who comes in from a position where there has been a snappy action during the day can see only the results that took place in his particular trench. If his battalion repulsed the Germans, he brings in word that the Germans made a general assault all along the line ; and in his heart he believes that his regiment has been the centre of one of the greatest actions in the world's history.

It is hard for any who go through an action where half their neighbours are killed or wounded,

## FIELD NOTES FROM

to realize that even the wiping out of his whole regiment or brigade is but a detail of the war, and that the fight which he took to be on so gigantic a scale was in reality, but a skirmish relatively. Thus it is that we get from day to day reports of great victories and great defeats from men who are absolutely sincere and intelligent as well. It is all but impossible in operations so large to get a perspective at all, and it is doubtful if even the staff gets more than a very vague idea of what has happened. The inaccuracies as to actual events are, however, small in comparison with unfounded general information. Reports of losses are wide of the truth by hundreds per cent. A hundred dead have easily been increased to a thousand by the time the report gets here, and probably more when it gets to Petrograd. If the Germans get a new army corps over here, we hear at once that they are withdrawing the bulk of their troops from the West front, and I sincerely believe that the majority of the plain soldiers over here think that they are fighting the greater part of the German army. If the Germans had here half what they are credited with, they would long since have had Warsaw, and by this time have been well on their way towards Petrograd, if they had coveted that city.

As for the number and the size of guns credited to the Germans, there is no limit to

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

the imagination which describes them. If a shrapnel bursts near one of the Red Cross assistants, he immediately concludes that it is at least a 10-inch projectile; and if he sees a lot of them burst, the story circulates here next day that more than half of the German guns are of the largest type. Even the younger Russian officers delight in magnifying the artillery of the enemy. One told me the other day that a certain shell hole that we were examining was made by a 42-centimetre shell, when it certainly was nothing more important than the projectile from a 4'7. It may be imagined, then, how difficult it becomes for the correspondent to piece together the thousand fragments of news and get anything like a true estimate of the situation taken as a whole. If one stays in Warsaw, one runs the risk of being absolutely led astray; and when one manages to get out to the front itself, all perspective is entirely lost.

It is possible, however, to keep a rough check on troops moving through, and the numbers of wounded that are coming back, and one can obtain by diligent research from many quarters an approximation of the Russian line as it varies from day to day. From the wounded it is difficult to get very much, for almost without exception they are so confused with the details of their own experiences, that they know nothing at all of

## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

the general action, and many are not clear as to whether they won or lost it.

Correspondents are still unrecognized officially, but there seems to be no objection to individuals slipping out on their own account. The front is so near, and there are so many persons connected with the Red Cross motoring out every day, that it has become a very simple matter to get out every few days and have a peep at the position. It is certainly an extremely comfortable way in which to do a war. Here one puts on one's old clothes and goes out and spends the day at the front and returns in time to have a clean-up and dinner at a fashionable restaurant. The nearness of the positions makes it possible for many officers to get in, but considering the size of the army before Warsaw, the numbers that one sees here are relatively few. Most vigorous rules have been laid down about officers here off duty, and this hotel, as well as all the others, undergoes a checking process twice daily to see if any officers are shirking their duties at the front in order to have a little amusement in the big hotels at the base.



A NIGHT ATTACK IN A SNOW-STORM





## CHAPTER XIX

### A NIGHT ATTACK IN A SNOW-STORM

Dated : GUZOW, POLAND,

*January 6, 1915.*

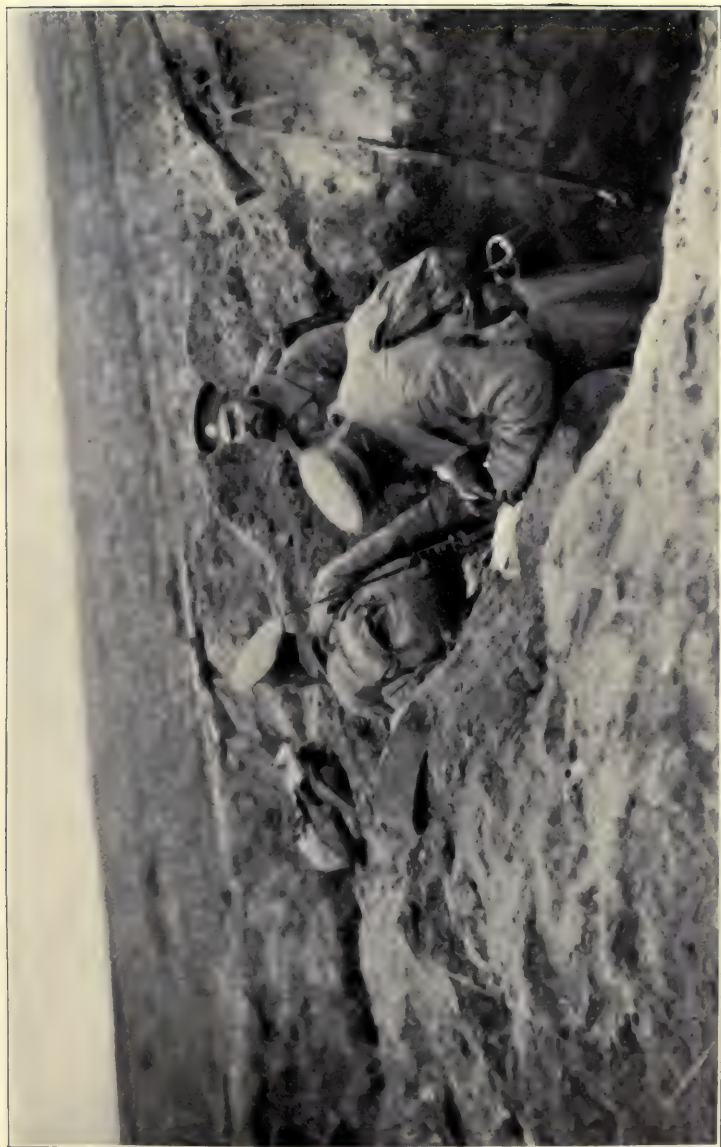
THE good old days when a war correspondent could go out and stand on a hill and actually see infantry and cavalry advancing, and with his glasses observe the genuine development of an action, are gone for ever. Even if one could come and go as one pleased, it would be impossible to see the things that the reader at home is anxious to hear about. Poland in this neighbourhood is flat, and unless one is fortunate enough to get up in an aeroplane or a balloon there is no such thing as really seeing the details of an action at all, even though one be all but in the battle itself. It seems incredible that one can be within a thousand or fifteen hundred yards of an actual attack and still see almost nothing but the bursting shells. However, this is the fact, even in the daytime, and at night it is still worse.

I had an opportunity of being pretty well in the heart of such an event last night. I and

## FIELD NOTES FROM

Granville Fortescue, the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, accepted the invitation of a gentleman in the Red Cross to run out with him from Warsaw and have a look at some of the field hospitals in which he was actively interested. Following the general situation from Warsaw becomes rather a bore, and so we gladly accepted his offer, and about eight o'clock on the Russian Christmas Eve we found ourselves just finishing a simple meal, in a little room in one of the improvised hospitals. Across the hall from where we sat some tired nurses were cleaning up the operating room, and piling bloody bandages into a big basket. The last of the day's wounded had been attended to, and were already tucked in the straw in a great shed across the street, where they were to spend the night before moving back toward the big Warsaw hospitals.

"Shall we make a visit to the positions?" asked our Red Cross friend. Both Fortescue and myself had for a week been desirous of getting into the first line trenches in order to form some accurate estimate as to the condition of the Russian soldiers, and now, on the eve of the Russian Christmas, seemed an exceptionally fortunate time in which to make them a call. As we came out into the street of the quaint little Polish village it was snowing. Not a blustering, windy snow-storm, but that quiet, gentle unassuming kind of



A Russian Soldier writing Home from the Trenches.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

snow that comes drifting down aimlessly hour after hour, and by morning leaves a white blanket inches deep over everything. Our friend had provided a cart with one weary horse, and into this we climbed, and started westward out of the village. The night was as quiet and serene as the picture on a Christmas card. From the front came not a sound to break the stillness. Once out on the main road we came upon the interminable transport which fills every highway and by-way by day and by night. Long strings of artillery caissons, bearing shrapnel as Christmas gifts for the Germans, plodded along through the falling snow, the weary drivers nodding in their saddles, while the soldiers on the caisson lay crossways on the limber, their feet hanging limply over one end. The whole transport seems to move intuitively at night with half the drivers sleeping in their seats.

For more than an hour we drove down one of the great avenues of trees that line nearly all the main arteries of travel in this country. Then we turned off across a field, and for another half hour zigzagged about over a route which seemed familiar enough to our guide, but which to us was as planless as the banks of Newfoundland in a fog. Finally, after driving for nearly two hours, we brought up at a bank of a small creek. With the flashes of a pocket electric lamp our guide dis-

## FIELD NOTES FROM

covered the ford, and we drove in—and stuck fast. It was as still as death, with only our voices and the soft ripple of water in the little stream to break the silence. The snow was still falling, and our coats and hats were already white. While we were trying to tease our patient little horse to make one more effort to get us out of the river, there came a sullen boom, from far off to the west. Then a long way off another and another and another. “Ha,” said our guide, “the German guns. We are in luck. They may be planning an attack.”

Even as he spoke there came a quick red light to our left through the haze of snow, and “Bang” said the sharp incisive little field gun hidden somewhere over there in the darkness. “Bang, bang, bang,” said two or three brothers in unison. Almost simultaneously a second battery over on our right came into action with a succession of rapid reports that shook the air. Our little horse made an extraordinary effort, due to the excitement of the firing perhaps, and we got up on the river’s bank once more. As we stood in the road there came an earth-shaking crash, and a flash as of lightning from our rear, and a six-inch shell from one of our big batteries a mile or more behind screamed overhead. We heard its melancholy wail fade away, and then a long way off the sullen boom of its explosion. A sudden contagion of

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

fire seemed to sweep the countryside, and in an instant the still night was torn and shattered by the crash of artillery, the whine of shell, and reverberations of heavy explosions. The small German guns now broke loose, and we could plainly see where our own trenches were located, from the quick, hateful jagged flashes of the bursting shrapnel above them.

We climbed into our cart and pushed on toward the front as rapidly as possible. For ten minutes the thunder of the artillery shook the air ; and then puncturing the greater tumult came the sharp little crack of a rifle, followed by a series of reports like a pack of fire-crackers exploding. Then it seemed as though some one had thrown a thousand packs of crackers into the fire. The artillery redoubled its rapidity of fire, and to our right front a machine gun came into action ; then another just before us, and then a whole series off to the left, until it was impossible to pick out any single piece from the confusion of noise. The flash of the guns and the breaking of shells gave a light like that of a pale moon, and we could clearly see the road ahead of us.

Leaving our cart and patient pony, we pushed forward on foot toward the trenches. Our way led across a field, and then through the fringe of a little grove of Christmas trees. In the field the snow was deep, and we kept stepping into

## FIELD NOTES FROM

holes and going headfirst into drifts. The crackle of musketry, the monotonous hammer of machine guns, the steady roar of the artillery around us and the whine of shells above us, still continued. After stumbling about in the snow for half an hour, our party came to a halt. The attack which seemed not above a thousand yards before us was still going on. Rockets from the German positions soared on high, and burst with a great white light which we could see even through the snow. Somewhere some one had a searchlight, for we could see its great long finger sweeping here and there across the sky. The noise and tumult continued, but we did not go farther. Our guide thought that it would be impossible in view of the attack, for us to get into the trenches, and I believe he was not sure of the way in the dark. So we turned back, and in half an hour were back at the first dressing station.

Each soldier has his first-aid package, and somehow or other they manage to care for themselves and each other in the trenches with such assistance as the busy doctor in the first line can give. Thence they come back to the dressing station, where their rough field dressings are removed, and better ones put on. They are again moved back one link in the chain, where, as at Guzow, there is an operating table and complete surgical equipment for the more imperative cases.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

As we stumbled into the little hut from out of the falling snow in the fields, the wounded were already beginning to arrive. A half-dozen carts with canvas tops, like the old American prairie schooners, were already standing before the door; and sleepy soldiers were stumbling about in the dark helping to get the wounded out of the carts and into the little stuffy hut, where in the dull light of oil lamps, the great patient Russian soldiers, still in their bloodstained bandages and wet and dirty from the trenches, were waiting for treatment. And still from without came the noise and tumult and clatter of the armies celebrating Christmas Eve, the day of "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."

It soon became obvious that we could get no farther toward the front that night, and a little after midnight we started back toward Guzow in our little cart. After we had been on the road a short time the firing began to slow up, and then gradually ceased entirely, save for an occasional spasmodic crash from a field gun, or the heavier boom of a big howitzer that still kept up the fight as though unwilling to go to sleep at all, even as a big dog bays and bays long into the night and refuses to be quieted.

We took a new road home, with the result that we were soon off any road at all and plodding about in the fields. A mile or more from the



## FIELD NOTES FROM

front behind a hedge we stumbled on the reserve ammunition of the batteries that had been in action. The Russians apparently keep their first reserve caissons constantly ready for action, and I have noticed here as elsewhere, that the horses stand in their harness all hitched to the caissons both by day and by night. Here behind the hedge were perhaps sixteen six-horse teams, each attached to the ammunition caissons. The fuzzy ponies stood apparently quite contented in the snow, their little heads hanging low and their ears flopped forward. Probably they were sound asleep. Under the caissons in the snow lay the artillery soldiers, also sleeping deeply. Both men and horses were covered an inch deep with fallen snow, but it seemed to trouble neither men nor horses. Everything at the front is casual to a degree. Here their batteries were in vigorous action not over a mile away. Men were dying and killing each other two miles away, but these chaps were sound asleep in the snow.

It was three o'clock when we got back to Guzow, and our host put us to bed in a great room already crowded with workers in the service, who needed rest and sleep far more than we did.

Thus on Christmas Eve did one more of the thousand odd details of the fighting on our front pass into history as a repulsed German attack. Hardly a day or night passes in which the iden-

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

tical thing does not happen at least once ; sometimes it happens two and three times in the twenty-four hours.



## A VISIT TO THE TRENCHES





## CHAPTER XX

### A VISIT TO THE TRENCHES

Dated from A CERTAIN PLACE

WEST OF WARSAW,

*January 10, 1915.*

THE lot of the struggling journalist who wants to see things in this war is a hard one. It is difficult to get west of Warsaw, and the nearer one gets to the front the harder becomes the task. While I was turning over in my mind how to manage it without a knowledge of the Russian language, there came a wire from the General Staff informing me that I had been temporarily assigned to the group of Generals from the Grand Duke's headquarters, who with a Staff Colonel were making a trip over the Warsaw positions. So my way was made easy for three of the pleasantest days that I have had during the war.

The company consisted of General Sir Hanbury Williams, the representative of the British Army, the Marquis De La Guiche from the French,

## FIELD NOTES FROM

and General Oba from the Army of far-off Japan. Colonel Moucanoff of the Grand Duke's personal suite was in charge. Our party left Warsaw in a special train and proceeded to the headquarters of the General commanding the army group west of here. We found the General, whose name is well known in London, but whose identity I am not permitted to disclose, established with his staff in what had formerly been a women's sanatorium. The great sun parlour where the ladies used to bring their knitting, and discuss the gossip of Russia, has now been turned into a telegraph office and general telephone exchange. Here the thousand and one details of the operations of a gigantic army are cleared and digested every day. Great maps with forests of pins show the movements of all the regiments and brigades under this command, and there are enormous numbers of them.

We stopped only long enough to exchange courtesies with the commander and his staff, and then in two great grey military motor-cars started west for the headquarters of a certain army corps, the number of which cannot be disclosed. Our two cars were of the most powerful army types, each directed by a Siberian trooper with a hat like a bushel basket of black wool on his head. The weather was bad, and the roads in horrible shape; but the big cars ploughed



**"Times" Correspondent (Stanley Washburn) and Maj.-Gen.  
Sir Hanbury Williams.**



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

through the mud like an ice breaker opening the channel to a frozen harbour. About 1.30 in the afternoon we turned into a village and at its outskirts into the driveway of a beautiful summer estate, where the commander of the army corps had his headquarters.

The General met us at his door, and with the usual clicking of heels and the saluting of salutes we were ushered into a really lovely house. The front hall was given over to telegraph instruments and dirty troopers and orderlies standing about waiting for instructions. The fine old library with its hardwood floor and wonderful woodwork and bookshelves loaded with volumes in all languages had been taken over for the Commander's private dining-room. The rest of the house was filled with soldiers and officers tramping about in their spurred boots over the shining floors, which, by the way, shine less I should say with each day that the war lasts. Here the General gave us royally of everything that one could desire in the way of food.

Immediately after dinner we emerged into the beautiful grounds, with trees now laden with snow, and accompanied by the Chief of Staff mounted horses and started our journey to the front. Three Cossacks rode ahead ; fifty or more fell in behind as a guard of honour, and our little cavalcade proceeded toward the positions. After



## FIELD NOTES FROM

a ride of an hour we halted at another, though less pretentious, villa where the Brigade Commander had his headquarters. Poland being as flat as a board, it is very difficult to get into the advance positions without drawing the fire of the enemy. The road to the trenches for which we were aiming, lay for two miles in direct vision of the German line, and for this reason we dismounted and passed an hour taking tea until the early dusk began to settle over the landscape. As the weather was pretty bad we did not need to remain until it was actually dark before starting, but set out a little after four o'clock. We were not far from the front here and the dull boom of the guns sounded every minute, first from one quarter, and then from another.

For three-quarters of an hour we rode on, and then the Chief of Staff turned suddenly off the road, and by a faint trail through a bit of woodland led us to a clearing. At first sight it contained nothing of interest, but on the farther side we saw at last the carefully masked battery of the Russian heavy artillery. The officer in charge obligingly offered to throw some shells into the German lines for our benefit, but as it was now getting dark and we were anxious to visit the trenches, we declined his offer and proceeded on our way. We made one more halt at the regi-

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

mental headquarters and chatted a little with the colonel commanding. From here we moved forward to the edge of a small wood and dismounted and proceeded on foot. The sharp crack of rifles now sounded spasmodically in front of us. Our guide, though a General, seemed to know every foot of the way, and with the sureness of an Indian following a trail in the forest, he led us through the woods, having first warned us to move separately and not in groups.

At last, turning off sharply, we came to the line of reserve trenches. The soldiers were sitting and squatting about in their little shelters, having their suppers as peacefully as though there were in the whole world no such thing as war. From this trench we entered saps and for fifteen minutes followed a maze of twisting trenches, until at last we emerged on the first position itself. This particular front lies along the Rawka river, with the trenches skirting the bluff on our side of the river. Heavy woods crowd to the very brink, and in and out among these runs the labyrinth of the Russian defensive position. I have in the past seen many trenches, but I do not think I have ever been in better and more comfortable ones than these that we now visited. The first line was very deep, possibly eight or ten feet in places, while saps ran back at frequent intervals to the reserve trenches, a hundred or

## FIELD NOTES FROM

two hundred yards in the rear, where the bulk of the soldiers of the reserves were gathered. We found the men well dug in, and shelters everywhere.

While it is true that a trench is not an ideal place to spend the winter in, yet it is equally true that there is a lot more comfort in a well-made trench than one would imagine possible. The officers' quarters burrowed out of the ground were extremely cosy. The major commanding the battalion had a room fully fifteen feet by ten, ten or fifteen feet under ground. One entered it by steps leading down from the main trench. Sofas, pictures on the walls of dirt, and a writing table on which an oil lamp burned brightly, gave the whole place a homelike appearance that one hardly expected to find on the very front line. The whole was roofed over with six-inch logs, which held up, I suppose, five feet of soil above that. In the corner was a telephone communicating with the headquarters itself. Nothing short of an extremely big shell bursting exactly on the top of the place would bother the inhabitants to any great extent.

Leaving this hospitable shelter we wandered about in the trenches for some time, working our way up to the one which was nearest to the German position. Here in sheltered overhauled ditches, one saw the butts of innumerable guns



A Soldier's Dug-out.





## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

sticking out of the loopholes, ready for the soldiers to jump to at the first sound of an advance. The main German line of trenches was between 250 and 300 yards from this position. During the day time this was, in fact, the interval between the armies, but at night both Russians and Germans pushed out their pickets to the brink of the river that ran between, cutting down the distance to merely a hundred yards. While we were there, these pickets, taking advantage of the night which had now completely shut out the view, began to work forward, and then began that spasmodic "crack, crack, crack," that one hears by night up on the front line.

The Russian troops were well clothed and well fed and their *moral* seemed extraordinarily high. The system of reserve trenches connecting with saps with the first line, makes possible frequent changes of the personnel of the first line. The shelters and comforts in the second line or reserve trenches were excellent. My own impression, from what I could make out in the darkness, was that fully two-thirds of the troops were in the second-line trenches, where they were not subjected to the nervous strain of rifle fire and constant sniping from the German side of the river. In case of a German movement during the night the pickets at once discover the activity and report it. Long before the enemy is actually under way, the first-

## FIELD NOTES FROM

line defence is at work through the loopholes with rifles and machine guns ; and before the attack becomes actually a menace, the reserves are fed up through the saps, so that by the time the enemy are really pressing the position, they have the entire available Russian line to meet them. From a defensive point of view I think it a fair assumption that the Russians have never had a stronger position in Poland than the so-called Bzura line. If they leave it at all it will be through some strategic consideration, and not, I feel sure, through any menace of a frontal attack.

We left the trenches through the saps by the same way that we had come in, and found our Cossack escort holding our saddled horses back in the woodland where we had left them earlier in the evening. We struck home by a new route, the greater part of the way leading through a most beautiful pine forest, a Cossack with a lantern riding ahead lighting our way. As I rode along in the dark with the clink of Cossack accoutrement jingling on all sides, my companion, General Williams, said the scene reminded him of Western Canada ; and to our surprise we discovered that we were both equally familiar with the great Empire of Western Canada that stretches even to the foothills of the Rockies.



The Colours in the Trenches.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

It was well on in the evening when our little cavalcade turned into the headquarters driveway. It had begun to snow, and we were all wet and cold and stiff as we slid out of our saddles and turned our ponies over to the Cossack. From within the house there shone cheer and light and the sound of many voices. As we entered the great hall, the full brass military band gathered in the background burst forth with the English National Anthem, followed in turn by that of each of the other Allies represented in our little party.

A sumptuous supper followed, and then we were led into the great beautifully furnished drawing-room in which army cots had been installed for our comfort. It always impresses me strangely to be constantly living in other people's houses, surrounded by all their personal knick-knacks and belongings. Here in a great gold frame on the table was a picture of a wedding party. A sweet girl bride with her little wedding group were sitting in the sunshine on the front porch. It was spring and flowers were everywhere about the verandah where now stand two solid Russian sentries each with fixed bayonet. And as I looked at the picture my mind drifted far from war, and I vaguely wondered where all these nice sweet-faced people in the picture were now. Suddenly the windows shook. "Boom" went



## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

a great gun not far off. And then again came the same old tumult "Boom, Boom."

"They're off again," said the General as he pulled off his boots. "Let's turn in; it's getting late."

# INSPECTING THE WARSAW FRONT



## CHAPTER XXI

### INSPECTING THE WARSAW FRONT

WARSAW, POLAND,

*January 12, 1915.*

**A**FTER travelling about in Poland for hundreds of kilometres in a motor-car and a fair distance on horseback, one comes to view the so-called "front" as a good deal of an abstraction. Here we have a nearly flat country covered with great patches of timber, and in every way adapted to getting lost in. From the plain one sees no landmarks whatsoever, and in the patches of woodland one can wander about for hours within a few miles of the firing line, and see no more signs of war than in the heart of British Columbia. Yet in odd patches it is all soaked in war. If one took an automobile and spent an unmolested month on the job, travelling every day, it might be possible to visit perhaps half of the positions and batteries; but I doubt if even that much could be seen in so short an interval. So, a trip of inspection to the front is like taking a sample of

## FIELD NOTES FROM

grain out of a goods-wagon. It is at best a mere cross-section of the situation at one point, and it is only by visiting a number of isolated and different points which are said to be typical, that one gets even a vague idea as to what the war is really like.

The little party of Generals with whom I have had the privilege of travelling, have been given every opportunity to view these typical situations, and if I describe what we saw, I am giving the reader the situation as accurately as it can be seen by any single person in a trip of a few days.

We spent the night, as has already been told, at the headquarters of the Army Corps Staff. The Chief of Staff, whose name I do not know and which I should not be allowed to mention if I did, is one of the most efficient men I have met in Russia. This admirable soldier gave up his entire day to our party, and under his direction we were up and away by nine in the morning, which is an early start in this country. In our great grey motor-cars we sped over the lovely Polish plain which in this direction tends to roll a little. It reminds one not a little of the Red River Valley in North Dakota, where it begins to slope toward the westward; only here we have patches of forest, which are not found in North Dakota.



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

For an hour or two our great snorting cars ploughed through the mud, passing through village after village whose Polish names are difficult to spell, and I believe impossible to pronounce. The natives pronounce them apparently without difficulty, but to a foreigner they are absolutely unpronounceable. We are running in the rear of the lines for the most part, and all the morning the air has been punctured with the occasional deep boom of a big gun. The roads, as usual, are crowded with caissons and transport and battalions of troops or batteries of artillery. A little before noon our cars sped past a sentry and turned into one of those lovely Polish summer places, so beautiful that any millionaire would wish to possess it. A great white villa at the end of an avenue through snow-clad trees is our destination.

This we learn is the Brigade Headquarters of Artillery.

The Colonel in command meets us on the steps as we get out of our cars, with the inevitable clicking of spurs and saluting of salutes. The beautiful old house is upside down with war now. In the front hall are a lot of blood-stained stretchers standing up against the wall. At a table is a telegraph operator. In the background there are mud-stained orderlies and Cossack despatch riders. They have taken up the carpets here, and the

## FIELD NOTES FROM

hardwood floors are stained with mud and dirt. A sweet-faced elderly woman with a Red Cross on her breast meets us, and I gather that she was the mistress of the house before the war broke out.

We stopped here but a few minutes to pick up the artillery Colonel and some of his staff, and then started out on foot to have a look at his positions. Behind the house was a lovely terrace, and below that an artificial lake which, overflowing a little dam at the foot of the beautiful garden, ran out in a little stream that rippled beneath the ice as it wended its way through a patch of pine trees in the corner of the garden. We strolled down a woody path of the estate and suddenly halted in a little clearing. For a moment we saw nothing, and then suddenly realized that we were in one of the Russian big gun positions. But these were so cleverly constructed by Christmas trees studded about the guns that it was impossible to see them until one was almost on them. Before each a space had been made so that the fire just cleared the tops of the trees on the other side of the small clearing. The guns themselves were set back under the pines. These were the big 15-centimetre guns with an 8-verst range. There they sat, their great throats open wide, with their muzzles pointed just enough in elevation to clear

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

the tree tops a few yards in front of them. Beside each, the caisson with its shells and charges of powder in brass cartridges were shrouded in trees that had been stuck in the ground all around, leaving only the business side exposed. Behind each gun were little trap-doors in the earth, each of which led down a flight of stairs to a submerged hut beneath the floor of the forest that towered majestically above.

Our friend the Chief of Staff chuckled with glee as he explained to us the difficulty the Germans had had in finding these guns at all. For nearly four weeks they had been in position in this grove, throwing their great shells into the German lines. Again and again the German aeroplanes had hung like hawks above the forest trying to discover the nest of wasps that were stinging them day after day. What information they gained is best indicated from the fact that in four weeks but seven casualties have occurred in this battery, while the German shells that came to search them out were bursting fully a thousand yards from the place where the big guns were placed.

Again we walked on through the woodlands. Our guide, the Chief of Staff, seemed to know the trail as well as the commander of the battery himself. Suddenly he turned off sharply from the

## FIELD NOTES FROM

trail; we moved through the peaceful woods, and in a few hundred yards came on another similar battery, similarly concealed. Here again four great guns sat, their muzzles peering just above the opposite line of tree tops. Certainly the operations of these big guns present the most extraordinary aspect of modern war. Here they sit day after day, miles and miles away from an enemy and from their target. When they are not in action it is as quiet and peaceful in this grove as in a primitive wilderness. No enemy will probably ever actually see them, but if, through misadventure, some skilled and sharp-eyed scout once locates this hidden group of monsters, this bit of woodland will in a few minutes be transferred into a perfect hell of bursting shell and flying splinters of steel. These guns will be overturned and the patient men who work them will be blown to atoms. But as long as they are undiscovered they go quietly about their tasks.

Slipping in their big shells and with nothing visible to the gunners but the row of tree tops across the clearing, the gunners send the projectiles screaming miles and miles away. In a few minutes a telephone tinkles from an observation point, maybe two miles away, and advises the commander of the battery where his shell burst. The gun is altered a little in elevation,



## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

and in a few minutes another projectile hurtles out of the grove and over the tree tops to burst miles away on the German position. At last the range is discovered accurately and the soldiers at the guns are told that their work is excellent. Probably nothing in the world can be more impersonal than the operation of these big guns. Unless by misfortune their position is flanked and they are enveloped and captured, it is doubtful if half of the soldiers ever see an enemy during the war at all.

From these guns we pushed forward to the positions where the light guns of the field artillery were crouching in hidden alcoves. After seeing the big howitzers these slim creatures seem as greyhounds compared to mastiffs. These also are all in positions of indirect fire, and, from where we saw them, their target was quite invisible. But for the 'phone message from the observation point, they would never know after their shell left their gun whether it was making good practice or falling miles beyond or short of the enemy. From the field gun positions we trailed off through woodland paths to a slight elevation on the very crest of which the woods ceased and an open rolling country lay spread out before us. Back in the woods were a number of shelters dug out of the forest floor, and, just on the fringe of the wood itself, two tripods standing



## FIELD NOTES FROM

in the brush held aloft the hyperscopes of the artillerist. These with their high-power lenses brought the German line, several miles away, almost to our feet.

Dug in between the hyperscopes was a sunken shelter in which the field wires converged. These linked up all the guns that were directed from this unobtrusive spot on the fringe of wood which certainly could not have been visible from a hundred yards away.

Our Chief of Staff, who loved every detail of his position, was as pleased as a child with the whole arrangement and showed us on a map where all the guns that we had been looking at during the morning were located relative to this position. "I will bring a battery into action," he said casually, "and you shall see our big gun practise at 6,500 yards. Our target is the German gun position. You can see it through the hyperscope." An obliging subaltern focussed the instrument and by the cross hairs in the field located the exact point that was to be aimed at. When all was adjusted the Chief of Staff spoke quietly to a man at the telephone. A second later there came a great crash from a mile in our rear and then the melancholy whine of a big shell over our heads as with a diminishing wail it hurtled to its destination. A second later a great black spout of earth rose from the German line, and then

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

came the dull thud of the explosion drifting back across the valley. Another crash and another shell passed over our heads and another cloud of earth and flying débris could be seen through the glasses. From a mile to our east and rear came another peal of thunder and again the wail of shells. The second battery that we had seen was in action.

The few German shells that came back in response to the salutation of our guns were not within a thousand yards of their target. For perhaps half an hour the bombardment went on, the Germans who were stung by the shells responding to our challenge, but gradually the fire on both sides slackened and at last subsided. These spasms of firing back and forth break out every few hours, day in and day out, along the entire line of the trenches.

We visited other positions and batteries, and in the afternoon we came back to the villa by the lake. Here there occurred a rather dramatic incident.

As we turned into the great carriage drive we came upon a whole regiment of Russian troops that had been drawn up two ranks deep on each side of the drive for perhaps half a mile. General Williams and Marquis De La Guiche passed down the cheering line, first recognizing with salutes the military honours accorded to them. About a

## FIELD NOTES FROM

hundred yards behind came the little Japanese, General Oba. Spick and span as though he had stepped out of a bandbox, with his trim uniform and gold aigrettes and gold-spurred boots, he looked as chic and smart an officer as one could see in a voyage round the world. As he passed up the line, saluting right and left, the great Russian moujiks cheered themselves hoarse.

As I watched this scene my mind ran back ten years. I was with this little General Oba, then a Colonel on Nogi's staff, before the blood-stained slopes of Port Arthur. In those days we were watching Japanese big guns hurling huge shells into Russian positions and congratulating our Japanese friends when a lucky shot was visible. I think even the little Japanese, the last word in intelligence and efficiency, felt the contrast.

A few minutes later we sat at the table in the great dining-room, having luncheon with the Staff. "Who," I said to him in an undertone, "would have believed, if it had been said to your people in Port Arthur, that in ten years' time you would pass up an avenue in Poland madly cheered as an ally by Russian troops?"

His intelligent eyes flashed, and with the quick intaking of breath with which the Japanese signify pleasure, he replied, "Ah, yes. Who

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

indeed? ” And as he finished there came a crash from the corner of the garden. The windows shook in their frames. The battery of howitzers was just coming into action once more.





## THE NORTH BZURA FRONT



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE NORTH BZURA FRONT

WARSAW, POLAND,  
*January 15, 1915.*

THIS war is primarily a motor-car war, and it is difficult to imagine what the staff, the Red Cross and the journalists over here would do on this extended front without this conveyance. From Warsaw as a base one can get out to almost any of the positions in a few hours' drive in one of the big high-speed touring cars that are employed by the army.

For the past two days we have been inspecting positions and batteries south of the Skierniewice-Warsaw line of railroad. The last day we put in on the north of that line in the territory lying between the Vistula and the Lowicz-Warsaw line of the railroad. Familiarity makes unusual things common. Nevertheless in the back of my head I do realize that the sights on this road would be really extraordinary if one were not so accustomed to them.

It would not be inapt to call this highway an

## FIELD NOTES FROM

ethnological museum of all the race products of the Russian Empire. I think I never began to realize what an enormous number of diverse peoples come under the heading of "All the Russias." On this road you see them all. In the first place there is the constant stream of officers and Red Cross officials in motor-cars, the type that we associate with Petrograd, Paris or London, or indeed wherever one sees Russians at all. Then of course there are thousands and thousands of the peasant soldiers of European Russia. Just now the roads are blocked with Siberian troops with their heavy faces and their woolly caps. Everywhere between and around are little bunches of Cossacks of all kinds, from South-Eastern Russia, from the Caucasus and from Siberia.

Last but not least we have just got in great bunches of the most extraordinary creatures from some of the Russian dominions in Turkestan. There seem to be two groups of these, each equally undesirable in appearance, and none of them, as far as one can learn, speaking any known language. They are almost as much strangers to the ordinary Russians as they are to us. One group of these gentlemen, who, like all the mounted troops of Russia, go under the name of Cossacks, is clad in untanned sheepskin coats dyed a brilliant orange. They wear on their heads a bushel or

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

more of black wool, in which there is a hole in which the head seems to be inserted. They seem a cross between a Chinaman and a Mongol, with deep red complexions and expressions which do not encourage familiarity.

From somewhere in the same distant region comes another group of gentlemen similarly clad except as to the colour of their sheepskins, which are a deep claret colour. Both ride the most exquisite-looking thoroughbred horses, with long thin legs, and delicate thin faces. When not on the road these men seem to be always engaged in caring for their horses. I have never seen them mingling with any of the other troops at all.

The transport is about equally divided in numbers between the regular Russian carts and the peasant cart of the Pole which, though small, seems well suited for the bad roads of the country. Each month of the war brings us more and more of the Siberian ponies, and practically all the artillery and a great deal of the transport is now equipped with these strong little animals. The more one sees of them the more one comes to realize their value. They certainly do not average over 800 lbs. in weight and are not much bigger than a cow. But when you get six of these sturdy little brutes all pulling at once it is surprising how they will drag a gun or an ammu-



## FIELD NOTES FROM

nition caisson out of the mud. They are equally happy and contented in wind, snow or rain. They sleep contentedly, their lower lips wabbling in absolute peace in a pouring rain or a driving snow-storm. I have seen them standing serenely covered with three inches of snow and apparently as undisturbed as a cow in the sunshine of a hay meadow in summer time.

Out on this front as on others I have observed the prevailing Russian custom of keeping horses in harness all night. The lead team are tied up to a cross rope, and then each team is bedded down with straw, and they stand just as though in a stable, with the caissons containing the reserve ammunition all hooked up. One will often see sixteen or twenty such teams standing contentedly in one place day after day. If there comes a sudden call from the front for ammunition there is no hooking up to do at all. The drivers climb into their saddles, untie their lead teams, and in a moment are off at a gallop down the road or across the fields to relieve the guns that are pumping shrapnel over into the German lines. The first ammunition caissons other than the limber with the battery seem to average about 2,000 yards behind the gun positions; the reserves perhaps six versts behind them and the supports perhaps another six, making all told not over fifteen versts for the entire dis-

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

tance between the guns and the ammunition column available for a single day's work.

On the north front our line is now on the edge of the Bzura river and runs through the town of Sochaczew. Just across the river are the German trenches; and here day by day the interminable firing back and forward between pickets and trenches, and between German guns and Russian guns, goes on. Sochaczew has been an object of the Germans' greatest desire, and scores of attacks have been made on this position. Several times to my certain knowledge, the enemy have gained a foothold on our side of the river, but have within a few hours been dislodged and driven back. Fighting of a similar sort went on for thirty-four days around Lowiecz, which is some eighteen or twenty versts to the south and west. We went out and had a look at the position here, but did not get nearer than several thousand yards to the town, because the Germans had chosen this particular time to throw shells into it. It was burning in three or four places, but the officers of the Russian battery which we were visiting regarded the occurrence as a casual one, and said that the Germans lighted up a few fires with their shells every evening at dusk to keep the town illuminated so that they could see what was going on in that direction.

Hardly a day passes when one has not an

## FIELD NOTES FROM

opportunity of seeing German prisoners, and in these one finds unmistakable proof that the armies of the Kaiser are becoming worn and weaker every day. I met a dozen on a certain railway platform the other day, and though my sympathies are not with the German armies, my heart pitied the miserable and pathetic-looking objects in German uniform which stood shivering in the rain waiting for a train to take them to Siberia. Nearly all were undersized, weakly, and haggard. I learned from one of them that they were Ersatz reservists and had been with the colours since August. The strain of constant fighting had told on them severely, and they looked ready to drop with fatigue. But whether one is in sympathy with Germany or not one must accord every respect to these soldiers of the Kaiser. No troops in the world have a better spirit. I got into conversation with these pitiable objects and inquired of one of them if the German army still thought they had a chance of taking Warsaw. Almost before the words were out of my mouth three replied at once. "Certainly," said one. "Without doubt," said the second, and "There is not a question of it," echoed the third. Though all looked pitifully lean and haggard, each insisted that they had more food than they could eat, that every company was absolutely at full strength, and in a word that

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

they were in every way satisfied with their cause. The more one sees of the Germans, and these are far below the average in type, the more one begins to feel that there is a long, long road ahead of the Allies before these determined people are broken. They will take a lot of licking, and he is indeed an extraordinary optimist who can question the truth of this statement.

One of the Germans whom I drew aside and questioned sympathetically in his own language, unbent a little and confided to me that as a matter of fact the troops knew nothing whatever about their own movements, and did not even know that an attack was in contemplation until a few minutes before they were ordered out of the trenches. He also informed me that the losses on this front since the last invasion began had been perfectly terrible, a statement by the way which was in absolute contradiction to his previous replies to the Russian officer who questioned him on the same topic.

One phase of the war which is constantly being borne in upon me is that Germany is losing now in personnel that which a generation cannot replace. I am increasingly surprised at the standard of men that one finds in the ranks of the reservists. Mechanics, artisans, students and even professional men abound, all serving as common soldiers. Every attack now, with its



## FIELD NOTES FROM THE RUSSIAN FRONT

ghastly losses to the Germans, represents a subtraction from the very best economic and industrial assets that the German Empire has at its disposal. In every group of prisoners one discovers men of the upper middle class who have been withdrawn from productive occupations of every sort. In one of the advance field hospitals last week a young attorney who was serving in the German reserves was brought in with such a hideous wound that his arm had to be taken off at the shoulder.

I am of the opinion that even if Germany could secure peace to-day on highly advantageous terms, she would still find that she has crippled her national life for generations to come. For in these days she is pouring out wantonly and with incredible disregard for the sacrifice she is making, the very blood and brains that has enabled her to build up the great commercial and industrial enterprises which have made her the great power in the world that she is to-day—or was before the British fleet bottled up her vast merchant marine.



## CONCLUSION



## CHAPTER XXIII

### CONCLUSION

**I**N the foregoing pages the writer has not attempted to give any outline of the whole Russian campaign in sequence. At this time, while we are still in the centre of the chaos and still writing under the supervision of an exceedingly strict censorship, it is absolutely impossible to describe the movements here from even an approach to a fair perspective of the operations. What has been attempted is a number of sketches from firsthand observation, of significant small details of the many thousands which go to make up the war as a whole. These odd scraps of cross sections of life and warfare, as it is seen and conducted on this front, may have a certain fresh interest for readers at home who are probably less familiar with Russia and the Russian method than with any of the other countries involved in the war. It seems therefore worth while to outline very briefly what Russia has done to date, and, as nearly as we know the truth, what the situation on this

## FIELD NOTES FROM

front is at the time when these lines are written.

So great and continuous has been the conflict on the West, that it is possible that England and America fail to appreciate the extent of the actual progress made by Russia since the World War broke out on the first of August. A glance at the map shows clearly enough that Poland, sticking out from the great bulk of European Russia, is by no means a zone of strategic simplicity in which an army may start operations. On the North lies East Prussia, which was occupied by the Germans. On the South lies Galicia, in which the great bulk of the Austrian armies, by means of excellent lines of strategic railways, was instantly concentrated.

Russia started her campaign simultaneously in the North and in the South, as it was of course perfectly evident that no advance from the Polish front on Posen or Berlin, via that route, was in any way possible until at least one of the great nations flanking Poland had been taken care of by the soldiers of the Czar. The Russians met with a catastrophe in East Prussia,"owing to the extraordinary difficulty of operating against an extremely efficient enemy in a country of lakes and morasses, totally unfitted for the mobile operations of artillery or transport. The initial advance there proved abortive, and up to the present time the

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

advance on Berlin in that direction seems improbable. In Galicia Russia found, pressing instantly in aggression on her whole flank, the united armies of Austria and Hungary, armies which proved themselves to be efficient and well trained. I am still of the opinion that I expressed in the article written from Galicia, that the Russian campaign there has been the most successful movement of the whole war. A vast number of army corps, moving from three or four different bases, in the course of a few months inflicted defeat after defeat on the Austrians and, uniting at the strategic moment, swept the resistance of an enemy (whom it is a great mistake to underestimate merely because he has been beaten) to the Carpathians in the South and up into the little wedge about Cracow in the West.

The first German attempt on Warsaw, as is now well known, was a flat failure and resulted in the absolute collapse of the Austrian and German offensive in the East. The situation round Cracow became acute, and with the early possibility of the fall of that city, and an immediate invasion of Silesia by the Russians, the hand of the enemy was at once forced. Germany was hurried into a demonstration in Poland, following her well-known axiom that the best defence is a vigorous offence. The second Polish invasion was launched so precipitously that two



## FIELD NOTES FROM

of the German army corps came within an ace of being captured, and but for a miscarriage of plans the Russians would have inflicted a very heavy disaster on their enemy. As it was, they undoubtedly threw out the German programme sufficiently to break up their scheme for a sudden advance. Before Lodz, weeks of vigorous fighting were required before the Russians fell back.

The Germans, having now put their hand to the plough of Poland's invasion, diverted army corps after army corps into Poland, pressing the Russians with the intensity and impetuosity which are characteristic of all their campaigning. Step by step the Russians fell back until their line rested from the Vistula through Lowiecz, west of Skierniewice, Breziny and southward. The Germans spent thirty-four days in attacking Lowiecz, which the Russians finally evacuated, to fall back on a partially prepared line on the Bzura river and southwards. An immediate advance on Cracow was suspended and the corps operating in Galicia fell back in order to give the Russians an approximately straight and simple line from the Vistula to the Carpathians. There seems little doubt that the original intention of the Russians was to retire to a line known to us as the "Blonie Line," which is twenty-seven versts west of Warsaw and an

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

ideal position of defence. It is probable that the Bzura position was intended as a check rather than a permanent stand, but a week elapsed without the Germans being able to break it strategically. As the cold weather came on, our line grew better, for there is nothing like inclement weather to make soldiers dig in and protect themselves. With each attack the Germans became weaker, and each day brought up fresh reinforcements to the Russians.

It now seems probable to most of us here who have seen the lines and been over a few details of the positions, that the Germans have reached their highwater mark in Poland, and if not actually on the Bzura, then certainly on the Blonie line. A month has elapsed now with fierce fighting at various places along the whole line. In many places battles lasting for days have occurred which gave temporary advantages to the Germans here and there; but usually the gains of to-day are nullified by retirements to-morrow. In many places our line has been dented, but taken as a whole the Bzura-Rawka line stands practically intact and is growing stronger every day. I believe it is not undue optimism to say that the German invasion of Poland, viewed in relation to its strategic aim, has failed. Whether they go back or camp here for the winter is not of great importance.

## FIELD NOTES FROM

Their momentum has been stopped, and their great machine, which depends primarily on the weight and speed of its advance, stands to-day stuck in the mud, with its engines practically at a standstill.

In the South we hear that the Russians are resuming the offensive and there is every reason for concluding that the Austrian army is practically out of the running as an aggressive agent, or as any great help to the German cause. Russia has then, in little more than five months, brought into the field, slowly, yet without confusion, her great army. She has definitely put out of the running the armies of Austria and Hungary and has brought the Germans to a dead halt. It seems to be the opinion in the West that Russia has had an easy task in Galicia, but this is absolutely untrue. The Austrians and Hungarians for months proved a brave and stubborn enemy. Russia has met the first shock and now finds one enemy almost in a state of collapse and the other thrown back on its haunches after a superhuman effort to reach Warsaw. It may be assumed that Germany has made her maximum effort here. Russia has not done so by any means. Day by day her armies are growing stronger and more efficient. By April Russia will be in the best position she has been since the war started, and, as far as one can judge here, will then be just

## THE RUSSIAN FRONT

prepared to put her maximum strength into the conflict.

It is useless to speculate as to the length of the war. It may be months, and it may be years, but it is the opinion of the writer that with the German failure on Warsaw the scales over here have definitely turned ; and that though we may yet have many battles and much carnage, the end is now assured. Germany has made two attempts on Poland, and as it now seems, she has lost her chance.

After nearly five months' association with the Army, there are of course many things that one would like to write, and comments that one would like to make ; but in so huge a war one must refrain from anything save the barest generalities until time and distance from the scene can give the perspective which is necessary to justify any definite conclusions.

THE END









UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
LIBRARY

---

Do not  
remove  
the card  
from this  
Pocket.

---

Acme Library Card Pocket  
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File."  
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU



